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THE

# PHILOSOPHY

OF

# SPECIAL PROVIDENCES;

# A VISION.

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# PREFACE.

If the reader will but imagine himself to be addressed by Truth, as my Guide addressed me, he may receive much good, and many suggestions, by carefully examining the following pages. They contain two Visions, and an Argument.

The *first* vision placed me in that moral and intellectual position which the professed believers in *supernatural* miracles and *special* providences generally occupy;—that is, it made me see with the eyes and through the opinions of those who *base* their faith and hope upon superficial perception and human testimony. The *second* vision enabled me to examine the seeming miracles and special providences, which are recorded in the Bible and elsewhere, through the pure mediums of Nature and Reason. But the argument is addressed to the Understanding.

An honest, unprejudiced, impartial state of mind is absolutely indispensable to a proper perception and comprehension of divine Truth. In this mental condition, and in no other, it is good to commence and pursue the present inquiry.

The Author.

# THE VISIONS.

## ARE THERE SPECIAL PROVIDENCES?

THIS interesting and important interrogatory revives in my soul a multitude of the most impressive meditations — visions so solemn and gorgeous as to revolutionize the deepest feelings, and expand the best conceptions to limits undefinable. The impression was too perfectly and forcibly imparted for me to ever disremember the *time* when I was made to *realize* what the majority of the world (especially the Christian world) believe concerning Divine interposition. My mind had been exercised many days upon the subject under consideration. The world-wide interesting problem, *Whether there had been, or were now, supernatural interpositions among men, for the purpose of changing, reversing, or regulating human affairs and designs*, was agitating my spirit almost continually; and I well remember the circumstances which attended its final examination and settlement. And let me here express — what I cannot but feel — the wish that every inquiring mind could be enriched with a similar revelation. I know, to the depths of my soul, that it would emancipate the individual from the slavery of ignorance, superstition, and bigotry.

It was the last day of the beautiful month of June when I received an authoritative impression, from the interior life, to ascend the summit of a high but familiar

mountain. My native village (by adoption) was visible at a distance on the opposite side of the river. This mountain was my usual retreat; nothing was there to disturb—but all outer things, the solitude, the stillness only broken by the song of birds, and the scenery, were conducive to spiritual development, elevation, and vision. Upon this mount, and at this time, my spirit, in its accustomed manner, was enabled to subdue and subordinate the body to itself, and my interior principles of perception were opened, and were permitted their easy and natural exercise. The problem to be solved was resting heavily upon me; and that innumerably diversified and mountain-high accumulation of individual biographies—unphilosophically termed personal and national history—were presented as the materials by which I was to be made *to realize* the general belief in a partial Providence, and the influence of such doctrine.

I saw the wide-spread Earth—its entire surface! It is easy to converse about the Earth, its dimensions, its scenery, and possessions—but it is not easy to grasp a *realizing* conception of its magnitude and appearance. When the mind beholds, at a glance, a conglobated accumulation of matter, twenty-five thousand miles in circumference; and, instead of a single great city densely inhabited, nine hundred millions of living human individuals; I say, when the mind beholds all this overwhelming combination of spirit and matter, the little material and space it itself requires as one individual, is enough to beget conceptions of its own weakness and insignificance.

When this view was given me, I ceased wondering that the inhabitants of original Central America once

believed their local habitation to be the centre of the universe, and themselves the favorites of presiding gods. Yes, I ceased wondering *at*, or blaming any people, or nation, for believing the Earth to be the masterpiece of divine creation, and themselves under the *special* and immediate control of various divinities.

Down, down the rugged declivities and towering pyramids of Humanity's History were my interior perceptions directed; and I beheld the many and different events and circumstances which were and are referred to the supernatural or miraculous interpositions of an invisible but *especially* overseeing Providence.

I saw approach, even to the margin of an awful precipice, a man whose mind had been, for many years, deranged; he fell over the brink, and was arrested, by some imperceptible cause, on his downward way; rescued, by his affrighted friends, from this perilous situation, he was found to be unhurt; and from that hour, henceforth, he was sane and well. The wise men and soothsayers of the city pronounced his escape "an instance of the *special interference* of the Lord."

I saw, situated upon the side of the sea, a beautiful village, whose people were accomplished in the science of agriculture. The sky blackened, the earth trembled, the ground opened, and several villages, and two opulent cities, were shaken and sundered into pieces; but the beautiful village remained wholly unmoved and unchanged. The priests said, "It was a manifestation of the *judgment* and *justice* of the great Jehovah."

I saw, standing before a splendid tribunal of Knights

Templars, a female, clad in the garments of condemnation and death; she was tried for sedition and conspiracy; the judgment was rendered against her; and she was harshly conveyed to the Inquisitorial Hall for execution; the executioner placed her head upon the block, uplifted the sword — and, lo! the terrific lightning struck him to the earth: the temple was set on fire, and scarce a person escaped unhurt except the falsely convicted female, who was thus saved. The people said, "It was the *judgment* and *interposition of Jehovah.*"

I saw a great and spiritually enlightened Reformer, Jesus, condemned for heresy, and for rebelling against the prevailing opinions and institutions of his age and country; the cross was erected, his body was nailed to it; the conquerors rejoiced in their supposed victory; and his few friends and disciples were convulsed with grief. The blackened heavens frowned upon the deed; the voice of the thunders was heard; the city was engulfed in darkness; the bursting earthquake rent the temple from its towering heights even to its foundation; the rocks opened their yawning mouths; and consternation was great and universal among the people. The followers and disciples of the martyr, young and old, male and female, said, "It was the *disapproval* of the omnipotent God."

I saw, giving in his oath falsely, a man, Ananias, who had disposed of some property for more money than he claimed to have received therefor; and while vehemently affirming, upon his honor and all sacred things, that he had not done what, in truth, he did do, his lips trembled, his eyes started wildly from their sockets, and he *fell dead*, in the presence of his ques-

tioners, — a perjured and self-condemned man. The public voice said, "It was a *direct* and *immediate manifestation* of the judgment of God."

I saw an abused and long enslaved people, marshalled together according to the directions of an educated chieftain, (Moses,) leave an Egyptian city, and cross, on comparatively dry land, a river which was parted in an extraordinary manner; the enslaver, Pharaoh, and his army, pursued this adventurous band, with the unrighteous design of re-capturing them; he led his armed hosts upon the dry land at the division of the waters, but the waves instantaneously embraced each other, and the king and his splendid army were as suddenly overwhelmed and destroyed. The victorious multitude, thus escaped from slavery, and from a grave in the bosom of the mighty tide, said, "The Lord had exercised *special* judgment and justice in the earth."

I saw, attired in the habiliments of wealth, and residing in a costly mansion, an individual afflicted with divers and painful diseases; disturbed slumbers, sleepless nights, horrid dreams, frightful pains and palpitations, headache, and suicidal melancholy: these were some of the afflictions. Physicians could do no good, nor did the sympathizers or prayers in churches relieve the pain; and the sufferer died. The people gathered in the chapel, and the officiating clergyman, after administering to the friends of the deceased the consolations of the Gospel, deplored this *signal visitation* of that Providence whose "ways are mysterious and past finding out."

I saw a beautiful and marvellously precocious infant, the final response to earnest prayers sent up to God and the idol of its parents, die in its mother's arms·

tears were shed, and lamentations were heard, occasioned by the unexpected removal of this priceless jewel; the village bell tolled the solemn knell, the mourners knelt in the chapel, and the priest said to the bereaved parents — "Providence gives and takes away."

I saw, on the holy Sabbath, sailing in a pleasure-boat, with other youths, a boy of some fourteen years. His parents, especially his mother, had admonished him repeatedly, on the morning of that day, against the dangers of breaking the Sabbath; but, instead of heeding their counsel or obeying their commands, he gathered about him associates, and sought pleasure on the water. A storm arose; it increased and raged violently; the boat was far from shore; the sails were rent in twain; the slight vessel was thrown upon its side; the disobedient son was suddenly plunged into the river, and ere assistance could reach him, was drowned. The parents, the minister, and the people said, "It was a striking *rebuke* and *dispensation* of Providence."

I saw the only and much-beloved daughter of wealthy parents, prostrated upon a bed, suffering the intensest agony; she was weeping, beseeching, praying for relief; physicians came, and learned consultations were held; but, though thus cared for, thus loved — and though hers was the flowering spring-time of human life — she suffered and died. The clergyman sought to soothe the broken-hearted parents by saying, that, "Though he was not in possession of those *evidences of her reconciliation with God*, which he hoped other young friends in his congregation, being warned by this early death, might furnish

him, yet he felt assured that Providence had *acted wisely* in removing that young spirit from earthly dangers and temptations."

I saw wide-spread pestilences — epidemics — infectious diseases — famines — wars and national invasions. I saw cities ravaged by fire, and destroyed by earthquakes; and all of these afflictions, personal and national, were referred to *special dispensations of Providence.* Earnest and wordy prayers were uttered by clergymen and their congregations; the devout sent up their orisons to God for "the widow and the fatherless in their affliction" — for the mariner on the uncertain ocean — for the coming harvest — for the officers of church and state; and I beheld that the widow and the fatherless *were* mainly preserved from absolute destitution; that the mariner escaped from the destroying power of storms; that the harvests gave forth their increase, and yielded abundantly; that official duties were discharged: I saw all this; and was thus made to *realize* the force of that belief which makes God to preside over the wondrous earth, direct the lightnings, pour out the rain, and hold the winds in the hollow of his hand; and to especially and locally bestow blessings or curses on human souls, designs and deeds. And it was given me to perceive that all these things, thus progressively presented to my understanding, were representations of numerous and similar events and personal experiences which had occurred in the past, and were occurring at present, in the world. And thus I saw how universal was the practice or habit of referring extraordinary human events and circumstances to the *special interpositions* of Providence or God.

The Scene was vast, and the Vision wonderful! my soul was made to draw *in*, and appropriate to itself, a so universal belief, the exemplifications of which were thus presented, and I experienced the legitimate influence of such a profoundly sacred conviction. And this result seemed to be the object for which the vision was given me. And now the mighty earth, with its inhabitants and their multifarious convictions, receded from my view; my spiritual perceptions were closed, and, in a few minutes, I was restored to my ordinary state. I could see nothing but myself, the mountain, the river, and the distant village. My memory was almost submerged with the wonders of my vision, the spirit of which had passed into my mind, and I experienced a greater attraction than ever before experienced towards mankind, their religious opinions, and the earth. I could not think of any vaster creation than an orb of twenty-five thousand miles in circumference, and peopled with nine hundred millions of separate and dissimilar individualities. It seemed no longer strange nor to be questioned why the Deity should concentrate his works thus; why his Son should have left his native home, to accomplish great and mighty works upon the earth; why prayers were necessary and efficacious; and why *especial* visitations of Divine judgment and justice, vengeance and disapprobation, were received and believed in, by the more advanced multitudes of the wondrously mighty earth. I could understand, and perfectly sympathize with, those dictatorial passages in the prayer recommended by Jesus,—"GIVE US this day our daily bread,"—"FORGIVE US our trespasses,"—"LEAD US NOT into temptation,"—"DELIVER US from evil."

Yes, I could comprehend the conviction that it is proper to inform God what we want, and to imploringly command him thus to gratify our individual desires. I could understand that, though the Deity is perpetually observing *nine hundred millions* of different souls, he cannot comprehend, at the same moment, their diversity of desires, unless verbally or orally informed of them; and that he would respond according to the righteousness of the individual petitioning. In a word — I had observed instances of (so called) Providential interference, and viewing them, together with all material creations on the earth, in an external and superficial light, just as the majority of enlightened classes view them, I was fully persuaded of their truth, and consequently the legitimate influence of such a conviction was impressed upon my mind.

On returning from the mount to my home, I well remember the conflicting sensations which were developed in me by the vision. I knew what it was to *fear God*, — I knew what it was to *tremble* before, and shrink from, a Being who, I was persuaded, could be influenced to exhibitions of approbation or terrible displeasure, by individual prayers and transactions. I felt that I did not know what village might next be consumed by fire, or what city destroyed by earthquake. I could not imagine what manifestations of supernatural interposition were to be next developed. When I walked upon the hills, my soul was not perfectly sure that they would not fall upon, and crush me; or, when a comet was announced by astronomers to be approaching our sun or earth, I was not confident that it would not, according to Divine intention, strike us into the oblivious depths of chaos. I had no as-

surance of safety anywhere. If in the village, I was not sure but the Deity, because of the many and frequent transgressions of its inhabitants, was contemplating, at that moment, its total annihilation. If on steamboats, or railroads, or where dark storms gathered over my head, I knew not but some vengeance was impending — some fearful crash, or thunderbolt about to fall. If where pestilential diseases environed, I was not sure but that destruction awaited the whole community, because of its corruption and wickedness. And now it was easy to believe in the chimeras of Millerism, — it was possible to believe that this great mass of matter, *twenty-five thousand miles in circumference*, was to be literally dissolved and consumed by fire, — that millions would be crushed by falling mountains, and millions would ascend, through roofs and any material obstructions, to meet the Lord in the air. Yes, I was, *for five days*, in the secrets of my own heart, a forced believer in such literal manifestations of Divine intention. I was ready for, and would not have been surprised to hear, the thundering sound of that awful trumpet which was to awake millions to everlasting happiness, and millions to endless misery!

In truth, this universal conflagration of Nature was *now* not so much a source of surprise to me, as was the apparent indifference, manifested by the greater portion of mankind, with regard to this impending event, in connection with the received opinion of the susceptibility of God to be influenced by human action and prayer. All acknowledge that "the prayers of the righteous are answered;" but why human actions did not correspond to (what seemed to me to be) the

most awful and terrific convictions possible to conceive of, was a profound mystery. Clergymen and laymen recognized this belief in their theology; but their practices were so divorced from their theories and professed belief, that I could not resist the impression that *their actions gave the lie to their convictions.*

It was now just six days since the foregoing change had been wrought in my mind; and my countenance, the index of the spirit, showed the withering effects of such convictions. I walked the pathless meadows in the vicinity of the village, and meditated upon the awful but sublime disclosures made to me on the mountain's summit. I contemplated the ways of God — what he had done for mankind; how he had been, and was continually, importuned, invoked, commanded. Again and again I thought of the nine hundred millions of inhabitants; and how national and personal individuality had been marvellously preserved in the midst of the ten thousand surrounding and absorbing influences; and how myriads and myriads had appeared upon the stage of the world's vast theatre, acted some particular part in the universal drama or tragedy of life, then made their exit, to live and act, upon another stage, an *eternal repetition* of good or evil. And then I contemplated *poverty*, *destitution*, and *crime*, — how well do I remember this soul-chilling contemplation!

Now the day was drawing to a close, and the sun was setting gloriously in the west, — Nature seemed to smile, and to pantomime the indications of joy. I had wandered to a retired spot, and had seated myself beneath the clustering foliage of some luxuriant trees, and there the local development of previous

conflicts and disturbances came forth from my soul in the form of interrogatories, and an invocation to God, whom, with every faculty fatigued and subdued, I thus addressed: Our Father who art in heaven, (for thus I am told to address thee,) who hearkeneth to the prayers of thy children, and who answereth the solicitations of the righteous; I beseech thee grant me audience. Justified by the example of those of the earth's inhabitants who claim to be thy children, and keepers of thy commandments, I presume to *remind* thee of many things which I think should be done, not to augment my interests, but the happiness of thy universal family, Mankind. In the first place, I earnestly desire to inform thee that I am perfectly aware of thy omnipotent power, and of thy disposition and habit of exercising the same at will. I gaze upon the greatness of earth, upon its mighty waters, upon the glorious sun, upon the bright stars with which thou hast written on the skies; I look upon thy wide-spread family, and dare to call myself also one of thine; and I behold everywhere wonderful displays of thy power and disposition to create and make alive. But from that combination of books which thy professed followers call the Holy Bible, I learn that thou *residest in heaven*, and yet that thou art a jealous, avenging, and revengeful God; and from those pages I also learn that thou art a perfect Being, — infinite in Power, in Goodness, in Justice, in Mercy, and in Truth; and that thou art Omniscient, Omnipotent, and Omnipresent. Pardon me then, I pray thee, O Father if I venture to ask — why, being all goodness and all powerful, thou permittest Want, consequently Crime, and consequently Misery? — Why permittest thou

War, Murder, Rapine, and Licentiousness? — Why, O Father! if thou art disposed to render *universal justice*, why permittest thou the strong and powerful to enslave the weak and helpless, and thus to mar the form of humanity with prostitution and slavery? If thou art *special* and *local* in thy providences and regulations, O why art thou silent, and apparently impotent, when the lightning rushes impetuously through the heavens, and, in its darting from place to place, destroys buildings, (perhaps the poor man's only shelter,) and human life, and the beasts of the fields? Why permittest thou destructive catastrophes, Famine, Disease, Sin, Death, and Everlasting Destruction? If thou art all good and powerful, O Father, why didst thou create me with attributes of justice, and capabilities of happiness, the very consciousness of which causes me to thank thee for my existence, and yet make me so unlike thyself, as thy character is revealed in thy partial government, and in the Book worshipped as thy word, that my instincts of benevolence are violated by thy, so called, *special providences*, and my conceptions of the principles of distributive goodness and equity, wounded by the manifestations of thy, so styled, justice. And, O Father! if the combination of books, written by different authors, who entertained dissimilar views of thee, and of thy government — one proclaiming thee to be "a jealous God," another declaring that thou art a "God of love;" one exacting vengeance, — "an eye for an eye," — the other teaching forgiveness, and "Love ye one another," — Father, if this book be thy True Word, why are not a greater number of the *nine hundred millions* of the earth's inhabitants more acquainted with it, and

obeying its commandments? and, even among those few who acknowledge it to be thy word, why permittest thou so much dissension and protestation?

Thy children ask thee for thy approbation and favors, O Father! as if thou wert not omniscient, as they teach me thou art; following, therefore, the example of these, named reverend teachers of righteousness, and of thy so called only Son, I pray thee to confer upon humanity, forthwith, the ability to behold Benevolence in thy benevolence, Justice in thy justice, Goodness in thy goodness, and Truth in thy word, wheresoever that word may be found. I pray thee to remove Poverty, to remove Crime, to remove Misery. I pray thee not to manifest thy attributes of Jealousy and Vengeance upon thy defenceless and dependent children, because such visitations will not improve the wicked, nor delight the truly righteous; but rather, O Father! displace Sin with Good, Slavery with Justice, Poverty with Plenty; do this, and I know that thy wayward and sinful ones will then have *time* and *cause* to praise and bless thee, and the righteous will be glad.

If thou hast, by voluntary volition, created the heavens and the earth, and if thou hast destroyed cities, led thy children to war, and cursed nations with famine and disease, by the *special* and *local* exercise of thy Almightiness; then canst thou create vaster earths, and build cities, give peace unto the world, and spread it over with blooming health and smiling plenty. Grant, O grant me this my supplication,—this, the *first* request which I have ever presumed to proffer at thy throne. And may I not ask thee, Father of my vision! —may I not ask thee why all things therein shown

me cause me to FEAR thee? And may I not learn why, being good, and omnipotent, and so watchful over the elements of earth and human affairs as thy attributed *special* providences and *local* judgments seem to evince, why it is that thou wilt not do something as signal and as effectual toward removing Sin and Disease from the world, and thus converting Earth into Heaven?

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The *legitimate* influence of a belief in Special Providences, and consequently in the ability of man to *move* his Maker by prayer and supplication, was completely embodied in the foregoing invocation. The belief begat in me what it cannot but produce in the mind of every one who realizes it, namely — Fear, Discon tent, Presumption, and dictatorial Prayer.

Immediately upon concluding my address, I experienced the evidences of coming vision throughout my entire system. In a few minutes my interior perceptions were opened, and I beheld the person of my internal and spiritual Guide. That his mission was to impart some important and consoling instruction to my half-distracted and exhausted spirit, I was absolutely certain. His brilliant body and radiant mind constituted a brighter sun than I had seen for several days. I was in the society of truth and good. When my interior condition was completely induced, and all my thoughts and perceptions were perfectly bestowed upon his glorious presence and mission, my Guide, fixing his sweet but positive expression of countenance upon my mind, thus addressed me: — "Thinkest thou, because the earth is *twenty-five thousand miles* in circumference, and because it is inhabited by *nine hundred millions* of individualities, that the Great Supreme Spirit is engaged

in particularly watching, specially influencing, and locally governing, that planet, its elements, and the people thereon? Speak, thinkest thou these things?" And I replied: "The earth, with its inhabitants, and the generally received *evidences* of special providences, were presented to me on the mount, in a vision, in a light more convincing of Divine interposition than ever was such doctrine taught by the aged and the educated about me in society." The countenance of my Guide radiated with even sweeter expression, as he again spoke, and said: "Speak, thinkest thou that these things are true, as they seemed to thee?" And I confessed my faith in *special* Providences by replying: "I acknowledge that I believe them." Whereupon my Guide threw the tranquillizing influence of his spirit over me, and, notwithstanding his manipulations, shut out the light of vision from my spiritual perceptions, and did not open my natural eyes, yet I felt as one with him, and buoyant as air. In a few moments I was wholly unconscious.

Anon, a sweet-toned and musical voice aroused me, and, with my consciousness, there came from the depths of my soul capabilities and powers which, previous to this moment, I had not known. Once more I heard the voice, and he who spake said: "Behold!" and instantly my perceptions were opened, and I saw my glorious Guide, whose spacious forehead and upturned eyes impressed me with the sublimest thought. Again he spoke, and bade me "turn and behold!" I obeyed, and, standing side by side with him, our faces in the same direction, I beheld the most magnificently gorgeous representation of creative power It seemed that we stood before the stupendous heights

of the universe, upon a turret of the temple not made with hands; surrounding us on every side were worlds innumerable, and yet how noiselessly, how harmoniously, did they move around an unseen Parental Centre! There was not a world whose magnitude did not transcend my even then exalted conceptions. Their sublime beauty exceeded all language, and their immeasurableness all known mathematical computations. O, what an overwhelming scene! Infinity seemed wreathed with worlds, and every world was decorated with lesser worlds, like mighty flowers of unutterable grandeur. Each and all were flying through the boundless realms of infinite space, with the velocity of the electric element, and yet they caused not so much sound as the ticking watch. Their speed was inconceivable, yet I could not see so much motion as there is in an insect's heart. I gazed beneath, and my perceptions enabled me to behold an awful depth, like unto a bottomless abyss. It was a sea of worlds, and so multitudinous were they, that in my attempts to obtain something like analogous numbers, I thought of all the drops of water on the earth, and yet the worlds of that sea were unnumbered. Again I thought of all the drops of water and grains of sand of which the earth is composed, and my Guide said: "Behold! thou hast now conceived of the myriads of worlds which are congregated in yon distant group." And I looked again, and beheld a *deeper Depth*, in a remote corner of which was that group of assembled worlds more numerous than all the atoms of our earth; and with still expanding and improved perceptions, I gazed and gazed into the depths beneath, there beholding seas of worlds upon seas of worlds — systems of worlds

upon systems of worlds — and yet I saw no bottom to that awful, but supremely magnificent vortex! I grew dizzy at the thought; whereupon my Guide said: "Thinkest thou that we stand upon the pinnacle of the universal temple, and upon the topmost summit of the vast creation?" And I replied, while trembling at the awful contemplation of the scene beneath, "I do." Continuing to gaze upon me with serene expression, and elevating his hand toward the heavens, he said: "Be strong, and behold!" Directed by him, my telescopic perceptions were turned on high, and I beheld with awe, and with an amazement which I cannot express, a vast ethereal concave, peopled with an endless concatenation of transcendingly magnificent Orbs or Worlds, too numerous to be conceived of, and too beautiful to be described with human language. Series, Groups, Degrees, and harmonious Organizations of Suns, Planets or Worlds, and Satellites, were visible everywhere; and I could see no termination to the height, nor to the depth, nor to the length, nor to the breadth thereof. I saw that the stupendous Whole was without alpha and without omega; it was infinite and universal!

The illimitable concavity, the interminable width, the bottomless vortex, the indescribable beauty, and the noiselessness of the mighty whole, overcame me with a dissolving sense of my own nothingness. I seemed to be losing my individuality, when my Guide thus addressed me: "Thinkest thou now of the *greatness* of an *Earth twenty-five thousand miles in circumference?*"

I felt not a little rebuked, for I recalled what I had once conceived of the earth's magnitude, supposing it

of such great importance in the sight of its Creator, but I was moved to reply, "No, O my celestial Guide! I think of it no more — the greatness and magnificence of what I now see absorb the *little Earth* as the ocean drinks in the dew-drops. But now, speaking of the minute world, the Earth, I feel moved to inquire concerning its numerous inhabitants — are they not great and important in the sight of the Creator?" Immediately upon asking this question, the quality of my perceptions was changed; instead of being diffusive and comprehensive, they were particular and penetrative, and thus ramified into immensity. "Behold," spake my Guide, and he pointed to the infinite wreaths of worlds which had been shown me before, "behold, and realize the scene." I looked, and with amazement I saw that every world which was shining in those wreaths was an immense Earth, whose actual magnitude exceeds all measurement, and whose surface was peopled with the most elegant and celestial beings; I saw them, male and female, and they were wonderfully beautiful, and not unlike the inhabitants of our earth, but they were infinitely more perfect and refined. And I could see gorgeous habitations — residences of exquisite grandeur, having architectural decorations and structural embellishments altogether too beautiful to be described. Gazing into such a world, beholding millions of inhabitants so perfect, so symmetrical, and so harmonious, I could not but exclaim, in my intense delight, "Surely this is heaven, and these are angels!" But my Guide quieted my enthusiasm by saying: "Thinkest thou *now* of the *greatness* and *importance of nine hundred millions of individualities?* Thinkest thou *now that they require and receive special attention?*" Again I felt not a little

rebuked for having so magnified *small things*, and I replied: "In view of these myriads and myriads of *human* yet *divine* beings, O kind Instructor! I confess that my thought of Earth's inhabitants has passed into nothingness, like the winged ephemera; but in a vision I saw what seemed to me, at that time, positive evidences that the people of earth *do receive special attention* from Him who created them."

As I ceased speaking, an atmosphere of spiritual, mellow light suddenly enveloped my Guide; and his countenance, though sweet and attractive, expressed an unusual positiveness of purpose, as he said: "Gather thy perceptions within thee; open thy understanding and hear me. I employ thee as a vehicle to convey my instructions to the inhabitants of Earth, and what I impart thou shalt first understand, *because the convinced understanding can speak as one having authority.* I was near thee on the mountain during thy vision of partial or local Providences, and also when, *as a representative of the most advanced theological and religious minds on Earth*, thou prayedst to God for those blessings which thou didst need, in common with humanity. And when I perceived thy misapprehensions, and thy interrogatories, and thy importunities, I was impelled by the celestial spirit of fraternal love (which is guardian love) to convey thee to heights where I could bestow a gift which is more precious than all thou askedst for humanity, — *the gift of* WISDOM!

"When thou didst think of the Earth's greatness, I saw that a *knowledge* of the immense seas and realms of Creation would improve thy thoughts and understanding.

"When thou didst think upon the *greatness* and *im-*

*portance* of humanity about thee, in consequence whereof thou didst believe in required and received *special* benefits and punishments, I saw that a more *enlarged view* of the *universal family* would elevate thy mind unto the mounts of Wisdom.

"When thou didst think that God would spread disease and destruction throughout cities and empires, and that his pleasure or displeasure could be manifested in answer to invocations, thoughts, prayers, or deeds, I saw that a more comprehensive and truthful understanding of his Character and Majesty would cause thee to rest, and *not fear*, but LOVE HIM.

"And perceiving that thy conceptions of the Supreme Spirit, his attributes, his government, or his local and fragmentary manifestations among men, were born of Ignorance, or were evidences that thy mind was suffering from a destitution of *true* knowledge, I therefore resolved to convey thee where *such* conceptions *cannot live*, and where the *causes* of *true* knowledge reside in abundance."

Here I felt impressed to inquire of my Guide, if he would present to me a view of the Earth and its inhabitants, that I might the more vividly perceive the amazing *contrast* between that world and the scenes of infinity with which my mind was now filled.

"Gather within thyself," he replied, "and I shall conduct thee thither."

We passed over an inconceivable portion of infinite space, in what seemed but a few minutes, and arrived at a beautiful planet.

"Behold," said he, pointing obliquely through the thin-orbed immensity, "behold, and realize the scene." I looked where he directed, and straining

my perceptions in the unsuccessful effort to obtain a view of Earth, I was forced to exclaim: "O, kind Instructor, I can see nothing!" And he answered: "Behold, once more;" and instantly I saw, in the remotest distance, a *small* bright spot, which gradually grew more and more distinct, and I could perceive something like clouds upon it; and as I continued to gaze, the clouds assumed the appearance of hills, divided by little streams of water. "There," said my Guide, pointing towards it, "you now see the Continents, the Mountains, the Seas, the Lakes, and the Rivers of Earth." Still observing the planet, I saw *accumulations* of various forms and colors, — white, brown, black, and of a smoky appearance, — manifested in different directions; and I saw numerous minute dark bodies issuing therefrom, going in and out, crossing and recrossing each other's paths, and some jostling one another. I was surprised at the appearance of such immense ant-beds or mole-hills, as they seemed to me, and could not but exclaim to my Instructor, "Surely this is not the Earth!" But he replied: "Thou beholdest now the numerous villages, cities, inhabitants, conflicts, and the pugilistic battles of Earth." Sensations of humiliation, and somewhat of dejection, crept over my spirit as these words were uttered by my kind but positive Guide. But continuing my observations, I saw, in every direction, and indistinctly appearing, numerous miniature buildings of various construction. And in several of them I could perceive some of those same little dark bodies, which my Instructor had informed me were Earth's inhabitants.

I was about to ask him concerning these buildings, so

indistinctly seen, when he said: "You now see the Churches, and the people who occupy them, in the most enlightened portions of the Earth." At this announcement I was much astonished; for I remembered that clergymen, and those who *built* and *supported* churches, believe and teach that their *faith* and *works* shine bright before God. I asked my Guide for the privilege of hearing what one of the many clergymen was at that moment saying. This was permitted me; and, through the medium of my improved and concentrated hearing, I listened and heard these words:—"We thank thee, O Father, for the gift of thy Only Son, and for thy Holy Word. We thank thee for thy sacred promises, for thy protection, and for thy loving kindness; and we pray that we may be led to seek salvation, through the sufferings, and the blood, (shed for us,) of thy only begotten Son." And instantly I could hear no more; but that prayer awakened a renewed interest in what I had seen, in my vision on the mountain, concerning special providences; the startling and external evidences of which, though I no longer believed them to have been rightly apprehended by me, seemed now to require an explanation. Whereupon, my Guide, instantly perceiving my thoughts, immediately replied to them, and said:

"Thou art soon confounded by the falseness and imperfections of thy natural birth-place, (the Earth,) because thy understanding has yielded too much and too frequently to its superficial erudition and testimony; and because also thy mind is not educated in the immutable principles of the Divine universal government. Thou desirest a knowledge of the *interior* and *true* Causes of those externally *represented*

instances of *Special Providences*, the professed super natural organ of which thou hast, in common with those about thee, sacredly believed. Listen, then, and I will explain to thee.

"First. — Concerning the man who was rescued, and cured of his malady, from the moment he fell over the precipice, thou wilt perceive that the following causes were engaged: He was an ardent student, and, by pursuing his studies to an extreme deviation from the invariable laws of life and nature, his cerebral structure was thrown into a state of semi-paralysis. He was affected with that species of insanity known by physicians as *Incoherence* or *Dementia*; the symp toms of which are incoherence of ideas, forgetfulness, extravagant speeches and actions, attempts to accomplish impossible things, &c.; and, in this state of mind, he approached and fell over the precipice, as thou didst in thy vision witness. But the *sudden* and *unexpected* arrest of his falling body, owing to its coming in contact with a mass of woodbine, and the *full* realization of his perilous situation before assistance could reach him, so thoroughly *revolutionized* the circulation of the blood and spiritual life through his system, that the paralysis was removed, and hence he was instantly cured. Physicians are acquainted with parallel cases — instances where vigorous and healthy individuals have had their hair turned white, or been cured of disease, or have died in a few hours, by the sudden and unexpected announcement of distressing or joyful news. And if thou wilt ponder upon these things, numerous other instances will appear, each accompanied with their producing causes.

"Second. — Concerning the saving of the beautiful

village, while destruction was surrounding it on every side; know thou that the interior causes of this extraordinary circumstance are to be found in the *situation of the strata* upon which the village was built. The primary and secondary stratifications were so interlocked and super-blended together, that, while other and different strata were rent and broken by the efforts of elements to regain an equilibrium between the internal gases and the external atmosphere, (commonly called earthquakes,) those strata upon which the village stood sustained no injury or disturbance.

"Third. — Learn, that the condemned female was saved from death in the inquisitorial hall, because the executioner held a conductor of electricity in his hand. Thou rememberest that his sword was very bright; but for this superior magnet, the female might have as instantaneously experienced the same fate as did her executioner and other inmates of the temple.

"Fourth. — The Earthquake, which occurred at the time the Romans crucified him whose name was Jesus, was a simple instance of coincidental or concurring circumstances. But thou must bear in mind this truth, that the *external* of anything is not the innermost reality; because the development of anything is colored and exaggerated, or deformed and subverted, more or less, by those external influences by which the development is surrounded. Thus, the written account of this earthquake is greatly exaggerated and unreasonably stated among some of the inhabitants of the Earth. It has become a romance, not a reality, — not a fact, but a fiction! Coincidences are of daily and hourly occurrence among the people; not similar in sublimity, but equally as wonderful, — such as the

sudden stopping of a watch, or the breaking of a mirror, or the howling of the house-dog, or the going down of the sun, at the hour of a spirit's departure from the body. *But the undeviating processes of Nature, and the ordinary, and sometimes marked, coincidental meeting of circumstances with those natural processes, furnish the true explanation of all local and extraordinary events which ever have or ever can occur.*

"Fifth.— The sudden death of Ananias, while giving in a false oath, was occasioned by psychological and physiological causes, or rather by the mind acting violently upon matter. He had a disease of the heart, known by physicians as hypertrophy; and, while making his deposition, the conflict was so great between *interest* and *duty*, between the consciousness of right and wrong; between the effort to *conceal* his *true* thoughts, and to *unhesitatingly speak false* ones; that his heart was unusually agitated, the blood regurgitated into its chambers, and forthwith its operations ceased — and this is certain and immediate death. The heart is not always diseased when similar instances of sudden death occur; sometimes mental excitement will burst cerebral veins, and cause instant extinction of life.

"Sixth. — The crossing of the Red Sea on dry land is another illustration of fictionized facts, of realities changed to romance. The Children of Israel were enabled to cross the Red Sea on comparatively dry land, by having their escape from Egypt predetermined and preärranged, thus: In one part of the Sea, there extended a *bar*, or miniature *mountain* of sand, which, during the recession of the tides, was completely exposed to the heat of the sun. This exposure

generally continued for several hours. Bonaparte and his army once crossed upon this bar; so did Alexander and his army; so also did three Egyptian generals, accompanied by their armed hosts. It was by this passage that the tribes, under Moses, predetermined to escape; and, in order to render their emancipation from Pharaoh and slavery doubly certain, Moses calculated their departure from Egypt with sufficient precision to reach and cross the sea just in advance of the returning tides. Thus he was certain, that, if Pharaoh pursued with his hosts, for the purpose of recapturing the tribes, the tides would return, while the army was on the *bar*, and overwhelm them; and his anticipations were fully realized. Thou seest, in this instance, how fortunate and extraordinary events are exaggerated by the *benefited* parties, as being the astonishing approval and particular dispensations of some attending Deity.

"Seventh. — The diseased individual, who believed (as did the clergyman and people) that her sufferings were punishments imposed by God, that she might thereby exercise patience, and have wrought for her a 'far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,' was thus afflicted because she had lived in perpetual violation of the laws of Nature. Having wealth and servants in abundance, she was enabled to procure, and subsist upon, the most expensive and therefore the most unwholesome food; the richest viands and cloying dainties; whilst indulging in luxurious idleness, without occupation, and dressing in the most unnatural manner, enslaving the freedom of the body, and denying it its natural and absolutely required exercise. And consequently, instead of experiencing

pain induced by foreign causes, she was reaping fruit according to the seed she *herself* had sown.

"Eight.—The beautiful and precocious infant, which thou didst behold, was thus developed and early called away, by causes which were in operation previous to its birth The mother had sustained no injury, no fright, no violation of Nature's reproductive laws; but she possessed a particularly studious mind, and had been arduously engaged in intellectual cultivation and pursuits after knowledge. And the child was a representative of these peculiar circumstances (which is an issue or result invariably to be expected); and its spirit, being so prematurely developed, exhausted the deficient forces in its physical constitution, and a slight extrinsic cause produced its death.—I employ the language thou art accustomed to *hear* and *use* when speaking of a Spirit's departure from the body.

"Ninth.—The youth who disobeyed his parents, and sought pleasure on what thou callest the 'Sabbath day,' was not drowned *because* of his disobedience, nor because the day was considered holy among the so styled enlightened minds of the earth; but simply *because* he was on the water, and because the storm raged at that particular hour. *Truth is simple and natural; Error is compound and artificial.* According to this propositional rule, I would have thee contrast *what* the people of the Earth said concerning the disobedient son, with *what* I have said concerning the causes of his death, and thou wilt most surely see *which is the simple*, and *which is the compound*, and how to distinguish truth from error.

"Tenth.—The affirmations of the Clergyman will appear to thee as weak and almost inexcusably unrea-

sonable when I inform thee that the young and interesting *daughter*, instead of having been removed from her parents and the earth by a special Providence, was *herself* the cause of her death. She had a constitutional predisposition to uterine neuralgia; and, by frequently exhausting her system with dancing, and by dressing herself in apparel wholly inconsistent with the atmospherical temperature and with her state of physical depletion, she acquired a severe cold; this induced inflammation and neuralgia, which, not being relieved, resulted in vital mortification."

The easy and natural manner in which my Guide explained the various instances of *seeming* special Providences, which I had witnessed in my vision on the mount, caused me to exclaim: "O, kind Instructor! my understanding gladly drinks in thy explanations; but I am educated, on the Earth, to believe that what *delighteth the understanding is frequently fatal to the eternal interests of the soul* — wilt thou instruct me in this?" As I spoke this request, the Earth disappeared from my view, and I turned to look at and again to question my Guide, when he said: "Dost thou remember the innumerable and Immortal Orbs thou hast seen? Dost thou remember the myriads of Seas of Worlds, whose tides flow so noiselessly through the boundless, interminable Realms of Infinity? Dost thou remember the unutterable grandeur, the inconceivable harmony, and the magnificent display of Infinite Love and Wisdom? Rememberest thou all this? If thou dost remember, then will I disclose to thee *another Truth*, — then will I reveal to thee that thou hast not gazed upon the Works of God from the Heights of its Universe, nor from a Turret of the Infinite Temple

Learn that thou hast but stood with me within the spacious VESTIBULE, and there contemplated *only* an infinitesimal portion of the Greatness, the Harmony, and Grandeur of the Universe. Those dazzlingly brilliant and supremely beautiful worlds, to behold which drew from thy spirit expressions of delight and amazement — causing thee to exclaim, '*This is Heaven!*' — they are but planets, and their inhabitants — those spiritually exalted and magnificently harmonious beings, whom you gazed upon with wonder, rapturously calling them '*Angels!*' — they are but *Men* and *Women*, in mind and body constructed upon the *same* musical principles as develop the human sexes on the Earth. Thou hast seen nothing compared with that which is still *unseen* — nor couldst thou as yet have conceived, from all thou hast beheld, *one* thought *worthy* to be termed *an idea of God.* What thinkest thou, therefore, now of thy doctrinal education on the Earth? How seemeth to thee the most enlightened teachers there? Hast thou now still remaining upon thy mind a *fear* that *He* who lives *through* and *sustains*, and *harmonizes*, and *perfects*, the million-fold of *Universes* and all their vast possessions — I say, *fearest* thou that *such* a Being *could* or *would* make a group of human spirits so imperfect as to cause the *heart* and *understanding* to *war* with one another? — and I ask of thee, canst thou still, for one moment, believe that such a Being is engaged in causing Wars, Pestilences, Devastations, and the numerous other Ills which the inhabitants of Earth have not yet learned to prevent — the Evils they have not outgrown? And thinkest thou that the Great Moving Principle of the Universal Revolving Heavens is to be importuned to

abolish those ills, to remove Poverty, Crime, Slavery, and Disease — to cure those Evils which are of *human origin*, and must *die* where they originated? I tell thee *nay!* The Great Living Principle — the Great Living Cause — the Great Living Father of all Worlds, and of their countless inhabitants, moves His Universe by Unchangeable, Immutable, and Impartial Laws! He creates no World, no Spirit, no Circumstance, by any other than General Principles; and therefore He dispenses no *Partial* Blessings or Curses in the Eternal Empire of His universal Government."

Silence, submission, and conviction, pervaded and penetrated my entire soul; and I only found words to reply: "I will remember — I will communicate what I have seen and heard."

"Then," said my Instructor, "gather thy perceptions and living powers within thee." I instantly obeyed, and I experienced the sweet, tranquillizing influence of his Spirit so thoroughly that a deep sleep came over me, even to entire unconsciousness. Again I was awakened by the music of his voice. I was still in the state I name my superior condition, and my Guide said: "Thou art again on the Earth, in the grove, under those trees where thou didst pray to God for instruction; henceforth, when Ignorance and Error, Superstition and Prejudice, arise mountain high before thee, and seem about to crush thee, — then remember! — remember what thou hast seen — remember then that thou hast stood upon sublime and stupendous *heights*, and upon eternal *elevations*, which, led by pure Wisdom, *all human Spirits may attain!* and whenever Earth's Theologies and Religions, those phantoms of the people, arise like shadows before

thee — then remember that thou hast read the Title Page of the True Word, and that thou hast entered the Vestibule of the Divine and Universal Temple — the "Temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!"

There was silence around, and holy stillness. My Guide said no more. The magnetic influence of his Spirit passed gradually away, and I returned to my natural condition. As I pursued my walk homeward, my heart was filled with happiness and contentment. The night had come on, and it was dark to the physical eyes. But the Sun-light of an Infinite and Eternal Day shone brightly through the now unfolded portions of my Immortal Soul; and by that Light which knows no darkness, I had learned *not* to *Fear* but to *Love* the Supreme Principle!

## THE ARGUMENT.

That the Deity bestows particular attention upon the Earth and its inhabitants, is an opinion which has been long and universally entertained by mankind. The Indian loves to believe that his tribe and lands were bequeathed by the over-ruling Sachem; that all his hunting excursions and achievements on the battle-field are rendered victorious in consequence of that Power's supreme approval. The Savage, the Barbarian and the Patriarch, are equally impressed with a corresponding conviction; but as individual and national experiences accumulate, and the principles of scientific research and civilization are unfolded, the Savage and Barbarian opinions become refined, systematized, and comparatively sublimated. In evidence

of this statement, I refer the reader to the fact, that, instead of the crude and petty manifestations of Supreme attention, recognized by the Indian, we find the sublimer and more dignified exhibitions of Divine design and power, in the writings and opinions of modern Patriarchs, Priests, and Teachers. These confine their attention not so much to the mere formation of our globe, as to the marvellous and sublime manifestations of Power and Purpose, which they profess to recognize as proceeding from the Deity to his children on the Earth some hundreds of years ago. Thus, they recognize special and immediate interpositions of God in the birth and finding of Moses; in the captivity, escape, and multifarious experiences of the tribes under his control; in his enlightenment, in his miracles, in his commandments, and in his principles of government; and in all that the various Prophets were enabled to perform; and in the birth of Jesus too, in his incarnation, in his life, in his teachings, in his miracles, and in the kind of death which he ultimately experienced; and also in the endowments and incarnations of Prophet, Apostle, Pope, Priest, Bishop; and in the supreme and absolute authority invested in the Holy Bible by the institution of the sacred Canon. Thus Patriarchs and modern Teachers have advanced and enlarged upon the convictions of the Indian, who only sees the particular favor of the Deity in his successful hunting, and victorious battles.

The origin of the belief under consideration may be *primarily* traced to ignorance. It is unreasonable to expect that any individual can have a more expansive view of God than the Indian or Patriarch, if he is

likewise persuaded that the Earth is the centre of Creation, and that its inhabitants are the *particular* children of the Creator. Those who acknowledge a belief in supernatural manifestations, or Special Providences, have somewhere in the mind a defective understanding of the Deity and his works.

But the belief in Special Providences has also a secondary origin in Desire. Some nations and individuals have a powerful desire to be considered particularly important and righteous in the sight of the Creator. It is gratifying and supporting to some peculiarly constructed minds, to think themselves divinely favored, divinely commissioned, divinely endowed; to believe themselves to be the chosen few particularly in the possession of a "high calling;" and thus actuated, such individuals, by first deceiving others, for the purpose of receiving the approbation and emoluments consequent upon such positions and endowments, ultimately deceive themselves. I once came in contact with an individual whose love of distinction, approbation, notoriety, and personal power, were so strong, and so predominated over his imperfectly developed attributes of prudence and conscientiousness, that he was moved to set himself up as the Jews' Messiah. At first it was but pretension; but at last he himself earnestly believed it; and did many things in demonstration of what he supposed to be his peculiar and personal mission to that unadvanced and disunited people. But the belief we are considering can also be traced to *Education;* therefore, *ignorance*, and doctrinal education, (which is mainly ignorance sublimated,) and *desire*, are, in numerous forms and states of combination, the causes of a belief in Special or Immediate Providences.

There is, however, *a belief of the understanding*, in the local and universal government of God, which is adequate to supply every demand of the pure and reasonable intellect. And this is the *belief* in the Perfection, the Unchangeableness, and in the Universality of the Principles of Divine Government and Legislation. These Principles are so admirably arranged as to comprehend, protect and govern, the Mighty Orb, the "falling Sparrow," the insect's Eye, and the human Soul. These principles are simply the rules or modes by which the Great Moving Principle governs the Universe, and bestows his universal care and blessings upon all created things. These Laws, by which He thus governs, are so unchangeable and perfect as to render supernatural manifestations both useless and positively impossible.

The miracle of changing water into wine, attributed to Jesus, is in direct opposition to the *established laws* of fluids and gases; and again, the miracle of the restoration of Lazarus to life and health, subsequently to the death and decomposition of his body, is in positive antagonism to the *determined laws* of life and organization; and so, likewise, the miraculous birth of Jesus is no less a positive violation of the *immutable laws* of reproduction and procreation.

The proof that these exhibitions of Special Providences never did occur precisely as they are related, is to be found in the *fact* that the Deity and his Laws are *perfect and unchangeable*. But, it may be said, that these miracles were performed according to preördained but previously inactive laws, which laws were called into effect, for the first time, when and where those miracles were wrought; and it may also be said,

that the Deity, "knowing the End even from the Beginning," did, in order to bring about these astounding developments of *might* and *design*, institute and make an eternal provision for the *special* action of a set of principles, which, previous or subsequent to the birth of Jesus, were not intended to be brought into requisition. This hypothesis, entertained by the most intelligent theologians throughout Christendom, is refuted upon the ground that the *Deity is an unalterable Being ;* that his laws are proofs of his unchangeableness, and, consequently, that he cannot make a set of laws for one age of the world, which in their action will develop effects in direct opposition to his universally established modes of being and doing in every other age. For, should it be admitted that God acted at one period in positive violation or contradiction of his works in every other period, then are the unchangeableness and the integrity of his character impeached, and all true confidence in his Infinite Perfection shaken and unsettled.

But again it may be urged, that God is All-powerful, and that he, therefore, can at pleasure *suspend*, *transcend*, or *destroy* any set of Laws which originated with him ; and that the miracles attributed to Jesus and others, together with the many instances of *Divine* special attention and interposition, recorded on the pages of profane and ecclesiastical history, were developed and performed, not by violating, but by suspending or transcending the operation of those Laws which are found to be, at other times, undeviating throughout Nature. To this again the reply is, that the Perfection and Unchangeableness of the Laws of the Deity render those miracles and divine interpositions both

useless and impossible. And, furthermore, it is not to be, for one moment, admitted that the Deity *did create* those Laws which operate so consistently throughout the illimitable Universe.

The Laws of Nature, like Nature itself and the human soul, were not created by the Deity, but were and are the spontaneous attributes of his divine Existence and Constitution. In other words, they are the inevitable and indispensable developments of the Divine Essence. Hence I affirm that the Deity did no more create the Laws of Nature than did they create him; they are simply the outer manifestations of the internal essential principles which constitute his existence and Organization; and consequently, the Deity and his Laws are equally beyond the possibility of being *changed*, *suspended*, *transcended*, or *destroyed*. All arguments concerning the possibility of *special providences*, or of supernatural manifestations and miracles of any character or extent, which are claimed and believed by many nations, sects, and individuals, can have their intrinsic value summarily determined by the syllogistic form of demonstration: Thus —

1st Proposition. — *Joshua claimed to have commanded and caused the Sun and Moon to stand still for several hours.*

2nd Proposition. — *The Deity and his Laws are unchangeable.*

3rd, Conclusion. — *Therefore, Joshua was either deceiving or deceived.*

And again, —

1st Proposition. — *Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and modern Christian religious teachers, claim for Jesus a*

*supernatural birth, and a supernatural power of working astonishing miracles.*

2nd Proposition. — *The Laws of Nature are beyond the possibility of being changed, suspended, transcended, or destroyed.*

3rd, Conclusion. — *Therefore, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were mistaken, and modern Christian religious Teachers are deceived.*

The consoling belief which flows from the understanding into the affections, and which is capable of satisfying the reasonable demands of the soul, is a belief that God is perfect and unchangeable; that he lives through all things, and has made life, harmony, and happiness, attainable to all. When the human mind conceives and believes that God is impartial, and that he displays his natural and harmonious attributes throughout Nature, and in the deepest recesses of the Soul, *then* it will rest and be happy. An individual, thus believing, is perfectly invincible to the invasions and tirades of that fallacious education, and hereditary prejudice, which exist in the world. The convinced soul is not disturbed by every "word of doctrine;" it is not moved by the preaching of miraculous manifestations, as demonstrating the divine commission of any man; nor can the doctrines of *physical resurrection*, or *final judgment*, or *eternal condemnation*, or any other absurdity and fallacy of the popular schools, affect the convinced understanding; for such know that God is an Eternal Magnet of concentrated Goodness, and that man's pathway is eternally onward and upward to the Supreme Attraction.

God is sufficiently *minute*, *local*, and *immediate*, in his providences, to impart life and beauty to everything

throughout the innumerable ramifications of infinite Creation. He possesses within himself the principles of all Motion, all Life, all Sensation, and all Intelligence. He is the Infinite Germ of the Great Universal Tree of Causation; and according to the absoluteness of self-existence, and consequent necessity, his celestial essences and essential principles unfold and flow, with the *minutest* precision, into the smallest atoms and organizations in nature.

It is not good, nor is it true or elevating, to believe that God originally designed and instituted an endless succession of consecutive causes and effects for the express purpose of giving birth to *just such an organization* as Jesus had, or such as any other individual may possess. But it is very good and righteous to believe that God unfolds and develops, from out of the inexhaustible plenitude of his Infinite Life and constitution, a vast combination of Laws and Elements which will *go on eternally*, elaborating human spirits, and will continue to improve and perfect them more and more in proportion as the circumstances of birth, of climate, of education and government, advance toward intellectual development and individual perfection. Hence it is unreasonable and unrighteous to believe that God takes special notice of those numerous transgressions, by which individuals only injure and experimentally educate themselves. Nor is it good to believe that God exerts his omnipotent power, with the express design of arresting the action of physical laws or elements, or to send rain, or to bestow *special* endowments, or signal privileges, or particular gratifications, in answer to the prayers of the, so styled, righteous. For such a belief would be admitting God

to be a "respecter of persons," and also the cause of inconceivable injustices and injuries to some — yea, it would be making him a mutable Being.

Let us think of this proposition, — let us consider, that, any clergyman, (it may be the present Pope Pius,) thought by many to be a righteous man, — suppose he prays for the protection of the king, for the enrichment of the kingdom, and for the perpetuation of a monarchial or theocratical system of government. And suppose that at the same time, a representative of the people prays as fervently for the downfall of the king, and for the establishment of a republic instead of a kingdom. Of course, these opposing supplications are addressed to one and the same God. Now if the Deity who rules the universe should grant the prayer of one of these individuals, the desires of the other would necessarily be ungratified, — his particular favor bestowed upon the one party would perhaps result in immense evils to the other. Again, a righteous man, living upon the mountain side, may earnestly pray for rain, to cause his fruit-trees and agricultural productions to yield abundantly; whilst another equally righteous man, living in the valley beneath, having already had a great supply of rain upon his farm, in consequence of water accumulating in his springs from off the adjacent hills, and knowing that any more, *just then*, would injure his forthcoming crops, he therefore earnestly prays to God for fair weather. Now if the prayer of the one be granted, the other will sustain great injury in his pecuniary interests, and so, *vice versa*. Hence, to be just and impartial, God must exist and govern according to universal and unchangeable principles.

In considering special and universal providences with a belief of the understanding, the highest and greatest comfort flowing therefrom is based upon the glorious and already (to me) demonstrated *truth*, that our earth is environed by a Spiritual World. And not only is our earth thus surrounded, but so likewise are all the earths or planets belonging to our solar system In truth, there is a *great* sphere of spiritual existences, which, touching it, girdle the material sphere, a part of which we are at present existing in; and again, encircling that sphere, are a galaxy of *greater* spheres, more refined and more magnificent; which are inhabited by spirits, drawn onward by the eternal magnet of Supreme Goodness. Thus there is a chain extending from man to Deity! And all that we can desire in the form of attention and dispensation is abundantly supplied, and handed down to us, by and through the spiritual inhabitants of higher spheres, the links in that chain of Love!

The human soul is constructed upon musical principles, which impart to it a constitutional tendency toward harmony and happiness. The various attractions to which its tones respond are Self-love, Conjugal-love, Parental-love, Fraternal-love, Filial-love, and Universal-love. But what I desire to impress here is, that these Loves are *innate affinities* which draw soul to soul; which cause the human mind to feel attracted to *corresponding* loves or *affinities* in other minds, without reference to time, space, age, position, education or circumstances. Therefore, should conjugal-love prompt an individual soul to *pray* for conjugal association, and should that soul's *true* associate reside in the Spiritual World, it is almost certain that

the prayer of the yearning heart on earth will be certainly answered by the spirit, which is impelled by this irresistible attraction to seek its true companion But here let it be remembered that all spirits and angels were once men; lived in physical organizations as we do; and died, as we die, previous to their departure for the spirit-home. And we all have relatives there — parents, sisters, and brothers, perhaps, and also relatives according to spiritual affinities. And the Spirit World is not far off; it is very near, around and above us at all times; and that which was truly joined here is not separated there; death does not divide, nor does it remove the loved ones beyond the reach of the spirit's desires or prayers. As conjugal-love is answered by some spirit having a corresponding attraction, so are other loves responded to by corresponding loves; and thus there proceeds to us, and that not unfrequently, a vast variety of good suggestions and righteous impulses, from some of our natural or spiritual relatives who now reside in higher spheres. And thus, too, when the soul is earnestly praying for knowledge whereby to direct social government, or for *light* upon the great problem of reörganizing and harmonizing society, it is perfectly *safe* and *reasonable* to believe that the noble spirits who have lived among us on the earth, and who are now particularly educated in these questions, draw nigh, and, perhaps, insinuate some valuable thoughts into the understanding of the praying spirit, — this would be a response to the fraternal-love, or the love of the neighbor. Hence we may truthfully say that Providence imparts special information — not by *direct* and *immediate* design, but by the operation of those natural

and unchangeable laws whereby are governed the universal combinations of Mind and Matter. Spiritual intercourse is developed and rendered universally practicable by the Law of Association, or by the Law of Affinities. Therefore, whoever should truthfully and sincerely desire or pray for light upon governmental and social subjects, whereby to reform society and develop harmony among men, he would, probably, *if susceptible to interior impressions*, receive something, it might be, from the now educated Moses — or Lycurgus — or Solon — or Plato; for each of these individuals had their fraternal-love considerably developed and rudimentally educated by the friction of social and other circumstances previous to their departure for the Superior Country. So also, should any individual earnestly seek to be enlightened concerning spiritual and religious truths; should he pray to know more of God and the Universe, it is more than possible, it is *probable*, that the now advanced Paul — or David — or John — or Fenelon — or some departed relative, having the filial-love fully developed and in constant exercise, would impart sweet instructions, and satisfy the inquirer.

I desire the reader to seek an illustration and confirmation of this fact by disciplining and unfolding the mind to the influx of spiritual impressions.

Responses from the Spirit World will never be conflicting; and, therefore, should an individual pray and receive what he considers a reply, and should this reply contradict what others have said or revealed, then the only criterion by which to *judge* of its truth or falsehood is the unfailing standard of Nature and Reason For instance — if a person should affirm

after earnestly praying, or while in what is modernly termed the magnetic state, that he had heard or perceived that the sun and moon were stationary during the period assigned by Joshua, then the statement must be tested by Nature, and Nature must be tested by Reason. Again, if an individual (Emanuel Swedenborg or Jacob Beman, for instance) should affirm that he perceived in the Spiritual World that the Bible is the Word of God — that it is a sacred embodiment of Truth — that it contains no errors — then the truthfulness of such an affirmation must be tested by referring it to the unchangeable and immeasurable Standard of Nature and Reason — thus:

1. *The Bible is affirmed to be* ALL *true.*

2. *Joshua's miracle is recorded in the Bible, which is not true.*

3. Conclusion — *The affirmation is false.*

Nature and Reason are the only mathematicians who can perfectly demonstrate and unfailingly exhibit the true or false character of every statement which the profoundly ignorant, as well as the educated mind, may be moved to make, under any conceivable circumstances.

The embracing nearness of the Spiritual World, and its accessibleness, furnishes the spirit with every advantage and gratification it should desire, through the mediums of providential dispensations or Divine interposition. But if the ambitious and aspiring Christian heart is dissatisfied with the *mediate* and *indirect* manner in which its prayers to God are answered — dissatisfied because the Deity himself does not more directly hearken to its invocations, then I desire to impress that heart with this truth: that no human spirit

has yet conceived a *thought*, or uttered a *word*, as it conceives of the Father, *sufficiently* magnanimous, sublime, or expressive, to be applied to even one of the glorious individuals, who, though once a resident upon some Earth, now treads the beautiful paths and flowering valleys of the Spirit Home.

Think not, because God is so inconceivable in his Greatness, so elevated above special prayer, and special action, that he is far removed from our spirits — no, he

> "Lives in the soul, informs our mortal part,
> As full, as perfect in a hair as heart;
> As full, as perfect in vile man that mourns,
> As in the rapt seraph that adores and burns."

And so near is he, that in him we daily and hourly "live, move, and have our being," — we are in him and of him, and as the *body*, *branches*, *twigs*, *leaves*, *buds*, *blossoms* and *fruit* of a *tree* are unfolded and minutely developed from the essences and beginning principles which were originally deposited in its *Germ*, so does the Great Germinal Essence of the Universal Tree unfold and develop the *minutest branches*, *buds*, *blossoms*, and *organizations*, which perfume and adorn the Stupendous Whole.

If a particular bud, or a chosen number of buds, should set up a claim to special blessings and attentions, and should they invoke and adjure the Germ to dispense a large share of its life and fluids to them, the other buds may remain *perfectly satisfied* that *justice* will preside over every dispensation of the moving principle which gave them birth. So, likewise, should any individual, or class of individuals, make pretensions to righteousness in consequence whereof they presume

to invoke, importune, and adjure the Deity to grant them *special*, *immediate*, and *eternal* favors, other individuals may rest perfectly satisfied that the Deity and his Laws are Equal, beyond the possibility of Chance, Suspension, or Separation, and hence, that *Eternal Justice* will preside over the distribution of Divine life and happiness to every flower and spirit, to every atom and seraph, that has an existence anywhere in the wide-spread gardens of God!

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Having ascertained that the Laws of Nature are unchangeable, and that the Deity never alters his mode of being, we may now, by way of an application of these Truths, inquire —

## WHAT IS MEANT BY THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST?

The sin against the Holy Ghost, which is generally understood as being the unpardonable sin, is susceptible of a more reasonable interpretation than the learned scholars of early centuries, and the biblical commentators of modern times, have bestowed upon it. This question of the unpardonable sin has agitated many noble and educated minds; and it is not unlikely that it has confounded and frightened many honest and timid minds who have searched the primitive history for truths and everlasting life. But those clergymen and commentators who have inquired concerning the true meaning of this passage in the Bible, have been thoroughly satisfied, I believe, that it was a sin they never had themselves committed. If it ever was committed, they think the sin is certainly chargeable upon some neighbor, or a certain class of individuals.

Athanasius believed it was chargeable upon the Pharisees, for their contempt of Christ and his works, which they maliciously and wickedly imputed to the agency of the Devil, being at the same time fully persuaded that those works were performed in a good spirit; and in this imputation is an implicit disbelief in Christ's divine and supernatural origin; thus constituting, in the mind of a believer in supernatural and mysterious things, a most formidable sin, one too intrinsically evil to be forgiven.

The difference between a sin against the Holy Ghost and a sin of ignorance, of forgetfulness, of neglect, of inadvertency, and other minor sins against positive or negative precepts and customs, consists in the *former* sin being totally unpardonable, and the *latter* sin being possible to forgive until seventy times seven. But, I think it will appear to those who are accustomed to the employment of their reason, that the punishment which is generally affixed to the commission of the unpardonable sin is *entirely* at variance with those fair proportions which always characterize the principles of justice and truth.

The relation between this crime and its punishment is no more consistent, just, or intimate, than burning a member of the body, or sowing seed, in America, and feeling the pain, or reaping the harvest, in England. Nor are we to suppose that an individual, who (compared with the infinite Creator) is but a finite and almost insignificant creature, can possibly commit a crime which will be attended with eternal consequences. For, let it be thoroughly impressed, that the human mind can no more *break* or *mar* one of the eter nal Laws of Nature than it can render the Deity imper

fect or unhappy! To believe that God will punish *infinitely* human beings for any *finite* transaction, is to believe that God is *unjust* — yea, even according to human principles of goodness and equity. Any punishment, to be just, must be proportionate to the magnitude of the transgression; and, therefore, the idea of an individual being punished with an everlasting punishment for that sin, which (according to true philosophy) is only an *injury* done to himself, is an idea only suitable to the barren mind of the barbarian.

But the true explanation of the idea of an unpardonable sin, (which idea I am willing should remain clothed in the terms, "sin against the Holy Ghost,") is now deemed necessary.

The terms Holy Ghost are applied, in theology, almost exclusively to the third person in the Godhead, but this furnishes no clue to a proper interpretation of the idea. The idea is simply as follows: —

The Great Positive Mind lives, moves, and governs, in the vast universe of mind and matter, according to certain fixed laws or rules, which constitute the *Holy Ghost*, or *Excellent Laws* that proceed from his Spirit into All things. The term *Holy* signifies *excellent;* and the term *Ghost* signifies *law* or *laws*. The individual is always under the control of three laws, which laws operate with an undeviating precision in his physical system, in his social relations, and in his moral and spiritual connections, to the world without, and to the world within him. These laws require the individual to be harmonious in his physical organization, harmonious in his social system, and in his mind. Indeed, a perfectly healthy body, and situation, and

mind, are absolutely demanded by the Holy Ghost, or Excellent Laws of our being. Inasmuch as we are governed by, and are only happy and harmonious when obeying, the *principles of* our entire existence, it is plain that any deviation from them would result in discord and unhappiness, to an extent always proportionate to the extent of the deviation; and let it be fully and indelibly impressed upon the mind, that *there is no possible way of escaping the legitimate and entire consequences of any infringement upon the operation of these Natural or Divine Laws.* If you violate the laws of digestion, of gravitation, of reproduction, of locomotion, or of any of the functions of the body or mind, or any of the natural relations which subsist between individuals in society, you will receive the *legitimate consequences* of your violation, and there is no other atonement.

The answer to the question under consideration naturally comes in at this point. It is this:

An infringement upon the operation of Nature's Laws *cannot be forgiven*, but must be settled by the individual's suffering the consequences of the infringement. In other words, a sin against the Holy Ghost, or against Natural Laws, cannot be forgiven — cannot be pardoned — cannot be mitigated — cannot be augmented, but must be settled by a *full* and *complete* experience of consequences, according to the nature and extent of the sin.

It may be supposed that an individual is punished, not according to what he has done, but according to what he intended to do. If this opinion is entertained with reference to the commission of the unpardonable sin, and in justification of the eternal punishment of

the individual who commits it, then I would refer such a believer, for a full refutation of his opinion, to those laws by which we are unerringly governed. If an individual intends to burn his whole body, and only burns a finger, he does not suffer for what he *intended* to do, but for what he *did* do, to his physical system. Should an individual intend to murder a neighborhood, but, failing to accomplish his original design, only causes the death of *one* person, then he does not suffer for what he did, but for what he inwardly believes, or feels, to be the intrinsic evil of his intentions. The deed which would make a civilized man unhappy, would render an Indian joyful. A man is punished by the physical laws for what he does, and by the moral laws, for what he conceives to be the real wickedness of his intentions. But when the wicked intention ceases to inhabit the chambers of the mind, then the individual is no longer committing sin, and is, consequently, no longer punished. The punishments consequent upon evil intentions are exclusively experienced by the individual intending evil; and the causes of his suffering are to be found in those inordinate desires or actions which generate discord in his inharmonious nature. Thus, anything which produces discord in the physical, or social, or moral systems of our being, will cause us to suffer a physical, social, or moral punishment, and such punishment is always in proportion to the extent and character of the disturbance produced. But, inasmuch as the primary causes of these disturbances are hereditary, educational, and circumstantial, it therefore follows that when these causes cease to exist, these disturbances will also cease to exist; and hence there will not be a per-

petuation of effects or punishments throughout the length and breadth of eternity, as clergymen generally affirm. Now what it is well to believe is, that every infringement upon the physical or moral laws of our being will be followed by its appropriate consequences — *and from them there is no escape.* Therefore, such infringements are sins against the Holy Ghost, and should every Christian in existence be executed upon a cross, it would not lessen a single pang, or save the individual from the legitimate effects of such righteous and efficient causes.

# FREE THOUGHTS

# CONCERNING RELIGION;

OR,

## NATURE VERSUS THEOLOGY.

BY

ANDREW JACKSON DAVIS,

AUTHOR OF "NATURE'S DIVINE REVELATIONS," "GREAT HARMONIA," "PRESENT AGE AND INNER LIFE," &C. &C.

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R.A.H.
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# TO THE READER.

THE following "Thoughts concerning Religion" were delivered by the author at the Hartford Bible Convention. They are re-published in order to meet objections which generally prevail in reference to the propriety of making Religion and Theology topics for free investigation and free discussion. The author has presented his "impressions" in a fair and forcible style, which even the most superficial reader cannot fail to comprehend. It is hoped and believed that the author's "Free Thoughts" will find their acquaintance in thousands of minds

THE PUBLISHER.

# THOUGHTS CONCERNING RELIGION.

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THE course of Nature is marked by vast and mighty changes. In the lower departments of the physical world one set of circumstances continue till their mission is completed, when they gradually expire, and from their ashes a *new order* of things is born into existence. Every great general *improvement* in the physical aspect of the globe — every magnificent alteration in the relation of things — is preceded, accompanied, and succeeded by some grand announcement and startling demonstration. The formation of mountains — those glorious symbols of everlasting truth — was accomplished by the most terrible convulsions. From centre to circumference the terrestrial *ball* is shaken — portions fall while others rise — the earth trembles and quakes — and so are made the lofty mount, the beautiful valley, the undulating landscape, and the ocean's bed. But observe: terrible changes are *never* terrible in fact! Every alteration in Nature's domain is invariably succeeded by *better* circumstances. It is only man's short-sightedness which hinders his perception of the future good.

So in the religious world. There are circumstances

— conditions of mind and organization — which demand a change. And he who interrogates the page of progress on this point, receives back the answer that in the religious world great and startling alterations have from age to age occurred — disturbing, for the time being, the body of mankind with paroxysms of dreadful apprehension. But these changes are inevitable — indispensable, in fact, to the development and education of the world. The mounts of truth, the vast territories of reform, are thrown up out of dogmatism and despotism by stupendous efforts. And the genius of history, with pen and ink ready, stands ever near to record the causes and consequences of the alteration. So posterity and subsequent generations are enlightened; and the world at last learns the lesson, that Truth, like the ocean's tide, is ever onward and resistless.

There is nothing strong enough to stay the immutable workings of this principle of change — this law of alternation — this method of the universe! Kings, priests and tyrants utter heart-rending groans, and remonstrate bitterly at the awfulness and majesty of Change. Wherefore? Because they are so delightfully circumstanced in external things, and so strongly intrenched in the compelled ignorance and consequent servitude of the masses! But, thanks to the Supreme Power of the universe, the law of reform works unchangeably onward, and the dreaded hour at last arrives. *The voice of justice*, so long silenced by prevailing powers, is heard thundering o'er palace and cathedral; and all time-sanctified institutions are invaded by the disciples of REASON, notwithstanding the lamentations of their conservative proprietors and dreamy inhabitants!

The object of this Convention* is to explore and investigate *the origin, authority and influence of the Old and New Testaments.*

What a question for the nineteenth century! In the opinion of many well-meaning persons, a convention, with such an object in view, can be nothing less than an act of supererogation. They suppose the origin, authority and influence of the Testaments to be as well established as the sun in the heavens. This *superstition* is the chief in Christendom. Unaided by the revelations of science, how could the early inhabitants give us a Bible without mythology and errors? Without a philosophical and historical understanding of the *origin* of the Bible, how can we estimate its *authority?* Without a knowledge of the cause and extent of its *authority*, how can we ascertain the merits and demerits of its *influence?* These, surely, are the questions for this age, because this age, more than any other, possesses the requisite information to answer them. The miracle of *Joshua* could not be answered until the immutable laws of planetary harmony were discovered; the cosmological theory of *Moses* could not be answered until the science of geology was developed. As these sciences have *for the first time* gained a footing among the people, even so for the first time are the people *prepared* for the examination of the questions before this Convention.

In certain prudential minds are dwelling diverse doubts respecting the *utility of conventions*, either as instruments of good or exponents of truth, more especially when

* The Convention here alluded to, as stated in the preface, is the "Hartford Bible Convention" of 1853. By bearing in mind the fact that the author delivered the above at this Convention, the reader will understand the application of the references made to it in subsequent paragraphs. — Ed

called to the consideration of sacred themes. Most persons are educated to regard religion as too holy a matter for debate. I think that anything is too holy for *an angry* debate, but *nothing is too sacred* for calm investigation!

As every fountain declares the impurities and excellences of its own waters, so, in this Convention, where *individuality* of character is particularly encouraged, must each speaker stand, in presence of his own conscience, responsible for the utterances of his nature. This is free discussion. And my recommendation to each one is, Be watchful, lest, in the exercise of this blessed privilege, you get too much *inspiration* through combativeness instead of conscientiousness; and, in your anxiety to enforce a proposition, be careful lest your thoughts fall from the magnificent posture of *principles* to the common error of personalities. The Convention, if conducted with these simple precautions, cannot fail of doing good.

I have said that no matter was too sacred for *calm* debate. The plea that religion is too delicate and divine for analytical examination, is, in my estimation, the excuse of *unsound* and *timid* minds. My eternal motto is, "Any theory, hypothesis, philosophy, sect, creed or institution, *that fears investigation*, openly manifests its own error."

We do not plant ourselves gladiatorially in the arena as mere antagonists and combatants — not as mere destructionists, extremists and infidels — but in fraternal love, as the disciples of God-given REASON, as the uncompromising advocates for universal liberty of body and soul, as *constructionists* and lovers of moderation and temperance in all things, and as unflinching *believers* in

the existence and universality of Eternal Truth. Thus armed and equipped we come forth, and call upon every individual to bring his best thoughts on the points at issue before this Convention. The plea that religion is too sacred for public discussion appears transcendently *absurd* when it is recollected that this subject is publicly debated in every pulpit in Christendom! But there is no freedom in it. Every stamp of mind is engaged in discoursing *religion* to the people. But it is all priestly and dogmatic. It is done in the *pulpit* — a consecrated battlement, where laymen, no matter how talented and accomplished, are not allowed to enter! But we come to *the freeman's pulpit* — to the public rostrum — and invite hither the victims of the other mode of discussing religion. We urge them to prefer their charges, state their grievances, put their objections; and the candid devotees of whatever creed are hereby warned to appear before a public tribunal, and defend their theology and their interpretations of it, against the aspersions of disaffected minds.

Our course may be condemned, but let it be duly remembered that the *causes* for calling this Convention would not exist if Christendom were blessed with *Free Pulpits*. By free pulpits I mean churches where the reformer, the temperance man, the anti-slavery man, and the man of science, can go and lay his principles before the people — churches where conscience is kindly treated, where the law of individual liberty is worshipped.

Instead of this — which would do away with all necessity for Bible Conventions, and with all independent meetings for free discussion — the minister is encouraged in his efforts to denounce and defame any new movement with his accustomed dogmatism, encouraged to

prejudice the people against a matter of which they know absolutely nothing; and then, like the despotism of the Austrian government, the pulpit official closes up as far as possible every avenue to the presentation of a defence from the parties aggrieved. And what effects do these religious circumstances develop? I will show you. The people, conscious of having much truth, are driven at last from the pulpit of dogmatic theology to the platform of free discussion. And the consequence will be, that *the public rostrum will supersede the pulpit in value and for purposes of instruction.* Yea, our course may be condemned, as were the developments of Galileo; but I tell you that this Convention is but *the effect* of a set of circumstances in the religious world, which even one-sided and bigoted minds must apprehend and confess. When the cause is removed, the effect will disappear.

Most persons are educated to regard religion as being too holy for public debate. But what is education? It is an implantation of certain symbols of thought, transferred from one mind to another, as the artist paints on canvas. Thoughts are not given in this way, but the symbols or forms of expression into which the internal forces of the mind flow up. All the liquid elements of mentality are formed and fashioned in accordance with the symbols placed upon the mind by the hand of the master—just as water takes the exact shape of the vessel into which it is poured!

Is education, then, a sacred and reliable authority? How do you know whether the writer of the Shorter Catechism was correct or incorrect? How do you know whether the religion of Moses was right or wrong? God speaks in the sanctuary of the living soul! He

writes his religion upon the everlasting hills. It is simple, grand, universal. It never changes. But do symbols remain unchanged? The Old Testament idea of justice is our idea of revenge. The old conceptions of God will suit the modern devil. What though the Hindoo be educated to believe certain religious thoughts, is he therefore to be left undisturbed? Do not Christians send missionaries to place Christian symbols upon the heathen's mind? Shall we not, therefore, as Nature's missionaries, place Nature's symbols upon the Christian mind? The heathen loves his idols which man made; the Christian loves his Bible which man made; but we love Nature — physical, spiritual and celestial — which God made, and sanctifies with the undying glories of his Spirit.

Let us discriminate between religion and the symbols or *vessels* which are supposed to contain it.

If we have *wrong* symbols, the shape of our religion will be also wrong! Man outgrows the clothing of his youth; may he not also outgrow the symbols of his religion? The essence of all religions may be immaculate, which I fully believe, but if the symbols containing it be deformed, does it not follow that the shape of the religion would be correspondingly defective?

If you admit the probability of this proposition — which I think you cannot escape — then, let me ask, how can you inform your own mind whether or not your religion be in the proper shape, unless you make the subject a theme for calm investigation? "Agitation of thought is the beginning of wisdom." But you *fear* to investigate! *Anything which fears investigation openly manifests its own error.* Do you *fear* to investigate religion lest you be led away from the smile of Heaven?

What a groundless, ignorant fear! Is not heaven illimitable as the universe? Is not God everywhere present? Can you be led away from a Divine Spirit who is "before all things, and in whom all things consist?" Do you fear that by investigation you shall cease to be religious? Nay, nay, fear not; for true religion is the life of the soul! The love of worship is the strongest love, although in different natures it has different modes of manifestation. Religion and human existence are one and the same in essence.

Suppose the Emperor Constantine saw fit to call a convention of bishops and laymen for religious purposes; and suppose he and they, after much confusion and dispute, decided upon what books should be regarded as "the Word of God," and *what books* should be rejected as *spurious* gospel—thus, by virtue of *external authority*, manufacturing for the whole world, and for all subsequent generations, *religious* symbols through which the human soul commonly thinks of divine and spiritual things—suppose all this to be historically true (which it is)—let me ask: Are we not *as fully* authorized, by an example or precedent so conspicuously set, to call another convention, to consider whether any emperor or bench of bishops have a *peculiar right* to determine the shape and pattern of our religion? Religion was not *too sacred* for investigation then! Why should it be too sacred now?

Still you question the *utility* of conventions for this purpose! You think free discussions do not develop truth—that people are too combative and impetuous—that the cords of bigotry are tightened by the fierceness of opposition to it. But my reply is, That conventions are useful only as ploughs are good for the soil—they turn up *new ground*, break away poisonous weeds, and

demolish old stumps, for the subsequent planting of good seed.

Free interchange of thought and feeling is the only way to wisdom. Man's mind is developed by contact — is educated by the individualization and comparison of facts. Mind must first discover facts; then those facts must be by themselves examined; then they must be placed in contrast and juxtaposition; and then, from the latter arrangement, which comes within the jurisdiction of every rational being, there flow out certain definite *conclusions;* and these conclusions, the mind, by virtue of its constitution, is constrained to accept. Faith is the subject of volition. Like all organized bodies, human minds yield to the strongest pressure. Faith comes from evidence. "He that believeth *not* shall be damned." Should a man be damned for a thing which he cannot help? When properly applied to our faculties, the strongest proof makes the deepest impression.

According to this certain law, let me ask: How can a mind understand *religion* without investigation. A man may be a devoted frequenter of some particular church — may have listened with delight and edification to the exposition of a certain form of religious belief — but, having never compared one creed with another, what does he know of the foundation of popular theology?

He may read all the publications of his denomination — may know the Bible by heart — what does he know of real mental liberty?

I tell you that such a man is a thorough bigot! Should a reformer appear, this religious man, with the contents of the Bible at his tongue's end, begins his opposition by quoting texts. But as to whether these

texts rest upon any divine authority or not, he never stops to inquire, nor any one else. If the Bible says so, that is all-sufficient! Now what can such a mind know of impartiality and open-mindedness? What knows he of the glorious matrimonial principles whereby the universe was built, by which men and globes alike are regulated?

Concerning these things he is ignorant, for he would not be "wise above what is written."

And so, how profoundly does he abhor and condemn a Bible Convention! He is *sure* no good can come of it! In his opinion, it is as much as to affirm that the Bible is somewhere unsound—that it is not what great scholars and eminent philosophers have claimed for it.

Therefore the prudential bigot thinks and asserts that the only effect of a Bible Convention can be to lead weak-minded (!) persons into scepticism, and strengthen the disbelief already existing. In plain English, it is dangerous to examine a subject which, from repeated experiments, is found not triumphantly to survive the ordeal of a fair investigation!

Anything which *fears* investigation openly manifests its own error.

Of all modern suppositions, I think the idea that infidel arguments have all been fairly answered by Christian scholars is the most prominent. There is much pretension and constrained composure based upon the efforts of Christian writers. All infidel objections, it is solemnly asserted, have been exposed and exploded over and over again. And churchmen say that *all* that can now be adduced is but a rehash of old infidel arguments, which Dr. David Nelson and Leslie have completely refuted and overthrown.

I do not take issue on this point now, because I wish first to persuade you that we did not call this Convention for any such low grovelling purpose.

We are actuated by no desire to spread scepticism on religious subjects — nay, we pray and work for theologic liberty, for universal peace, for human love and brotherhood, for the kingdom of heaven on earth — hence we design to do all we can to prevent scepticism in those principles which God declares to be *the true religion!*

With this Convention (or another which it may suggest) we mean to drive the plough deep into the soil of popular theology and into the origin of those texts which priests hurl at the movements of every true reformer.

*It is my conviction that the more a man knows, the less he believes;* that is to say, the more we learn of the natural, the less we believe of the supernatural. Or, in other words, a wise man is seldom troubled with imagination. The reverse is also true. The firmest believer in the supernatural is one who knows but little concerning the physical laws of the world we live in. And as this vast system of natural existence is beginning to be better understood, it is easier to investigate and decide upon the asserted supernatural and miraculous, and ascertain what is and what is not entitled to the dignified title of "plenary inspiration."

Since the development of the sciences of astronomy, geology, chemistry, etc., it cannot be denied, I think, that there has been established *more doubt* than was *ever* before entertained respecting the supernatural origin and supernal authority of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. Prof. Hitchcock, Prof. Silliman, and several Englishmen of scientific attainment, have labored to rescue the Mosaic and dependent records from the vortex

of utter repudiation. But what have they accomplished? They have confirmed and consolidated the bigotry and superstition of persons already in the Church. What further? They have merely convinced individuals on the *outer courts* of the sanctuary that such minds are anxious to *nurse* and foster their reputation as orthodox authors; while their productions prove to the independent thinker that they acknowledge but very little about the intrinsic weaknesses of the theology for which they so earnestly and solemnly plead.

Hugh Miller, author of "Footprints of the Creator," who has written as good *a plea* in behalf of his theologic faith as any churchman could, is fully conscious of the ignorance of the clergy. He says,* "The clergy as a class suffer *themselves to linger far in the rear of an intelligent and accomplished laity, a full age behind the requirements of the time.* Let them not shut their eyes to the danger which is obviously coming! The battle of the *evidences* (of Christianity) will have as certainly to be fought on the fields of physical science as it was contested in the last age on that of the metaphysics. And on this *new arena* the combatants will have to employ *new weapons*, which it will be the privilege of the challenger to choose. The old, opposed to these, would prove of but little avail." Hence the arguments of Nelson, or Leslie, or Paley, or Watson, can have no weight in the stupendous battle about to be fought between despotism and liberty.

Notwithstanding this acknowledgment of ignorance on the part of the clergy as a class, there are persons who still regard them as masters in the theologic school—

* Page 45, American edition.

able to meet any objection which Astronomy, Geology, or Chemistry, can urge against the authority of their system. Of course it is very proper to suppose that the clergy are the possessors of the requisite *evidence* to prove the origin and sanctity of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. Now we bring, not the objections of a party, but the developments of the nineteenth century, to bear upon the questions under discussion. *We are not anti-Christ ;* but WE ARE anti-bigotry, anti-slavery, anti-superstition, anti-supernatural, *anti-everything* which militates in any manner against the development of human love and brotherhood. And we are (or I am, at least) opposed to anything in or out of the Bible which prevents or retards the normal growth of this religion. Greek, Hebrew and Latin terms, however classic and high-sounding — a mere battle of texts — can have no possible weight in settling questions which involve the origin and veracity of a record which is already in the English language, and recommended by the American Bible Society, in its *present translation*, as being the infallible Word of God. The clergy should feel grateful to us for taking the trouble to show them the battle-field of this century.

Religion, I repeat, is not too sacred for public debate , for religion pertains to the universal conscience of man ; it is the great corner-stone of the temple of human brotherhood, and a *Convention* is the instrument most calculated to chisel it out of life's foundations. This religion is not to be found between the lids of any book. It is in the soul of human kind. It needs development. Conventions, conducted with magnanimity and virtue of purpose, will accomplish much good toward the unfolding of universal principles. Flowers can grow with

strength and beauty only when well circumstanced. Conventions are valuable, not merely for the facts, truths and arguments they spread before the minds of the people, but particularly for the freedom of sentiments, and the examples of courageous utterance in the presence of persons accustomed to pulpit monopoly. When the human mind is once freed, and the philosophy of conscientious independence is presented to it, it spreads its wings and soars to summits of thought before unknown. Reason, on the wings of faith in justice, is a bird of paradise. Its flight is outward, inward, onward, upward! And the material and spiritual universes are opened to these flights of freedom. The eagle is reason's symbol, but the serpent is the hideous type of slavery!

We contend not for partyism, but for the world. Independence of soul, based on integrity of motive, is now demanded. Let us teach

> "Each man to think himself an act of God,
> His mind a thought, his life a breath of God."

And let us

> "Bid each try, *by great thoughts and good deeds*,
> To show the most of heaven he hath in him."

We have no ambition to excel our neighbor in argument, for a fluent tongue can give to total errors the semblance of truth; and although the hearer might not be gifted in reply, his soul would surely remonstrate and condemn in silence. Nay, our only ambition is to be *true men and true women;* to show the most of heaven we have in us! In argument we require facts as signs to go by, and principles as truths whereby to interpret them. No anger, no uncharitableness; love only, and *independence* of soul enough to declare a living truth,

even though the "*heavens*" of popular systems fall, and the "*stars*" in the pulpits be blotted out.

> "Read the face of Nature, that God-written Bible,
> Which all mankind may study and explore,
> Which none can wrest, interpolate, or libel its loving lore.
> Here learn we that our Maker, whose affection
> Knows no distinction, suffers no recall,
> Sheds its impartial favor and protection
> Alike on all."

The question of the *origin* of the Testaments is debatable from several stand-points; arguments flow in from sources hitherto unsuspected.

Archæological evidences are numerous. Antiquity is full of facts bearing directly on this point; but the difficulty of demonstrating the validity of historical records drives the investigator necessarily on the ground of internal evidence and inference. The proposition stands thus: Can a book have a divine origin which is self-contradictory, opposed to intuition and to fact? Can an unchangeable God, full of harmony and divinity, be the author of a book which contains inconsistencies, examples of revenge and repentance, and inculcates antagonistic rules for human life? One class of minds deny the existence of such inconsistencies and antagonisms between the lids of King James' Bible, while another class affirms them as demonstrable. If they do *not* exist, we infer the *divine* origin; if they do exist, we infer that the book is of *human* imperfection. Here is a subject for your investigation. Again, the *authority* of the Bible may be contemplated from several points: authority may be argued from the ground of utility — that it is the *best religion* in the world — that it satisfies the heart and the head — that it restrains vice and deifies virtue —

that, without the Bible, we would be without a revelation of God's will, be ignorant of the scheme of redemption, and that our civilization is dependent upon the principles thereby inculcated. But it may be argued that civilization is *not* a child of Christianity — that its authority leads to bigotry and intolerance — that *it is no better than the best part of any other religion* — that it does not satisfy but stultifies the heart, and confounds the head — that from the Bible we get our worst ideas of God — that the scheme of salvation does not save the world from sin, slavery and discords — that its authority is good only so far as its contents stand the test of conscience and of scientific principles.

One class affirms, another denies. And this is the time for a thorough analyzation of these respective positions. "Nothing extenuate or aught set down in malice."

Again, the *influence* of the Bible may be affirmed to be mild righteousness — that thousands are joyous under the blessings of the Christian religion, while the heathen, and nations without this system, are buried in ignorance and degradation. I think this point calls for special treatment from all minds. The question is, "Is the difference between heathen and Christian nations attributable to the influence of the Old and New Testaments upon the latter?" From this question all other questions under this head *radiate ;* therefore, here is a subject for your investigation.

Brethren, let us free ourselves from the sectarianism of the churches, from the mythology of the Bible, from the slavery of fear, from the chains of superstition! Reason is the sovereign of the soul, and truth is the sovereign of reason. Prove all things, hold fast to that which is good.

ALL True Religion is immutable. I wonder that any one can for a moment imagine the possibility of its overthrow. Is truth a mere circumstance? Do clouds and storms extinguish the sun? Is true religion dependent for its existence upon belief or disbelief — upon forms and organizations?

O ye of little faith! Go by the ocean's side, and behold far away the *rock of ages*. The storm-king sends his servants to battle. The clouds assemble, thunder answers thunder, from the four corners of heaven the elements rush to one centre, and the fierce tempest descends with all the pageantry of contending deities. The ocean groans with the voice of anger, mountainous waves roll forward with a mighty power; but amid all, and above all, stands yon noble ROCK, erect, unmoved and unchanged. Ten thousand times ten thousand storms may rage beneath, around, above — ages upon ages may roll away — empires may rise and kingdoms fall — millions of human beings may come and go — the terrestrial ball may pursue its pathway about the parent orb — yet unshaken and immovable stands the True Religion — firm as the Universe, beautiful as Deity.

You who fear or hope that religion will be extinguished, need wisdom; go, study the constitution of the world. Contemplate the ROCK in the ocean, which no storms nor contention can disturb. Gaze at the sun, whose life-giving glories no clouds nor tempests can ever diminish!

But where shall we find this religion which changes not? Ah, here is the question! And when we become acquainted with its locality, how shall we *know* that it is the "true religion?" What is the rock? The answer

may be found in the New Testament: "The kingdom of Heaven is WITHIN you." That is to say, the law and the spirit — the way, truth and life — are natural to the soul of man. Yea, religion has a rock in the soul. In its elements and essences, in its inextinguishable instincts and unfolding faculties, which are true prophets and true apostles — in these find we the true religion. If this position be not tenable — if the mind of man is not the basis of true religion — then is God a respecter of persons, partial in his dealings, and the New Testament answer must be a fallacy.

We hear much lamentation concerning the fate of the Bible. In most minds, religion and the book are *one* and inseparable. "They must stand or fall together!" But I cannot think so. Cannot a man exist without a shadow? Are symbols essential to the existence of thought? Surely the letter and the spirit are not indissoluble! If they are, then well may we lament and deplore any examination of the Bible.

The idea that the Bible is the infallible word of God — that *it* is the Rock of Ages, that in *it* is only to be found the *true religion* — is fatal to itself. There is a prevailing *superstition*, generated by commentators, that the Old and New Testaments are intrinsically and extrinsically harmonious. When the whole volume is *correctly* understood (they assert), the beauty and stupendous unity of the system is clear as the sun in the heavens. But this assumption is made by persons who have the presumption to suppose that *they have seen the harmonies* of the Scriptures.

Let us reflect on this. The assumption is that the Bible is the word of God — a supernaturally-originated and a supernaturally-inspired volume — given to man

for his enlightenment and salvation. And yet, according to the Protestant system of *private* judgment and liberty of conscience, each mind, though uninspired and in no manner supernaturally endowed, is left to read and find out the *meaning* of God in this word. While one man finds the Bible infallible, another finds it fallible; one discovers it to be harmonious, another inharmonious; and so come contention and criticism. I cannot but admire, in bold contrast, the beautiful logical consistency of the Roman Catholic Church. It never was guilty of trusting *religion* to the people — never committed a deed so fatal to priestly despotism as that of permitting an *un*supernatural laity to read and interpret a supernatural book! The *reading of the book is fatal* to the idea of its supernatural origin, also to its so-called infallible principles of religion and truth. When will Protestants fully realize their present situation?

Protestants must certainly see, sooner or later, that the door which Martin Luther opened can *never be shut against* the onward march of the free-born soul! The infallibility of the Pope is but a continuation of the Protestant idea of the infallibility of Moses, John, or Paul. If you admit the supposition of the possibility of *Isaiah's* infallible inspiration, you have then granted the premises upon which Pope-and-Priest infallibility is predicated. If God saw proper ever to inspire *supernaturally* a JEW or a dweller of Palestine, how do *you know* but he also sees it proper to *supernaturally inspire* a Cardinal or a Pope? If God has ever inspired a paper and pasteboard book, how do you know but that he now inspires the Roman Catholic Church? If you admit the one, there is no escape from the other. As believers in the supernatural inspiration of the Bible writers, you are,

according to every principle of logical deduction, constrained to admit the possibility of all which the Catholic Church claims for itself.

But Luther, I say, in protesting against the authority of the Pope, opened a door for the final rejection of the *book-authority* upon which the first is based. Pio Nino is as likely to be a chosen vessel of God now, as Paul was in the beginning of the Christian era. The superiority of the character of one man over that of another is of no account where supernatural transactions are involved in the premises. Therefore I affirm that the Protestant idea of *an infallible Bible writer* is the firm foundation of Popish despotism, and of all the absurdities of the Catholic institution.

Persuade me that the *paper and pasteboard Bible* is the infallible word of God, and I will at once accept the *brick-and-mortar church* as the recipient and emporium of his divine favors. Persuade me that Moses, Joshua, Solomon, David, Isaiah, Matthew, John and Paul were in very truth the chosen vessels or penmen of the Supreme Being, and I promise you that I will at once accept, and would demonstrate conclusively from your principles, that the unbroken chain of cardinals and popes, extending from Peter the First to the kingdom of heaven, are as certainly the attorneys of Jehovah, and as being indispensable to all temporal and spiritual government and civilization. If Moses and Joshua and Paul are to be my *masters* in those sacred principles which bind my soul to its Author, then why may I not accept *Pio Nono* as my *master* and father in spiritual things? You who are Protestant believers in Bible infallibility, *cannot* deny me this logical inference. But you reply that I should not allow a *mere man* to rule over my conscience

—that it is yielding my liberty to the jurisdiction of despots, and placing my soul in the keeping of mere priests and teachers of religion. Verily; but what are you Protestants doing, when you take Moses and Paul for your masters? Surely these were mere men also manifesting all the attributes and characteristics of humankind — and so, why should they, any more than Clement or Alexander, be my *masters* in the affairs of my soul!

Dr. Orestes A. Brownson, editor of a Catholic Quarterly Review, a man of much learning and independence, is a very consistent and faithful exponent of religious aims and tendencies. He has travelled from Egypt, through the wilderness of scepticism, into the promised land of belief, which he is now preparing to rid of all Protestants by logical weapons. Protestants advocate the supreme authority of the Bible, but tolerate to each man the liberty of reading its pages to suit himself. Brownson, on the other hand, advocates the absolute supremacy of the Pope, and denies to man any rights. God only has rights. Man has *duties*. The Church is God's representative, and society is under its exclusive dominion. The Church grants *privileges* to governments, and governments owe allegiance and obedience to the Church. Now, this is nothing less than theological or Protestant DESPOTISM, logically and legitimately carried into practice. But how much better than this is the Popery or clerical dogmas of Protestants? The Bible is God's representative or word, they affirm. The individual has *no* rights, but *duties*; mind is *not* the master, but the *subject* of its teachings. The Pope regards all as *heretics* who reject his authority! The Protestant denounces all as *infidels* who reject the authority of Moses! The idea is simply this Protestantism is but a *child* of

Catholicism. By a law of hereditary descent, the parent transmits its character to the offspring; but, as evidence of a law of progress, the child is not so wicked and degraded as its venerable progenitor.

Catholics make no more *opposition* to Free Schools, whereby *education* may be extended to all people, than do Protestants to the *free discussion* of the Bible, whereby *truth* may be elicited and transmitted to posterity. In regard to Free Schools we quote from Dr. Brownson:

"Our enemies rely upon Godless schools — State education — as a means of checking the progress of Catholicity. We must admit they have laid their plans with *infernal* skill. The result will *not* meet their anticipations, however. The attention of the Catholic world has been directed to this subject by those whom God has sent to rule over us, and a *struggle*, which will end in victory for the Church, has begun between Catholicity and the State, to see who shall have the child."

So speaks O. A. Brownson concerning Free Schools. But observe, when you read Protestant notices of this Bible Convention,* that, by substituting the word "convention" for schools, with one or two other alterations, you will see the same spirit manifested toward us. Indeed, it is hard to determine which is the worst enemy of freedom and humanity, the party that would make *the Church* our master, or those who would give to us the Bible as a sovereign, with only *feeble reason* to comprehend and harmonize its multifarious inconsistencies. Reason is *feeble only* after having been for a lifetime subject to bondage. Protestant denunciation of Reason is paralleled by Catholic defamation of Protestantism; the opinions of the two parties are equally valueless.

* Reference is here made to the Hartford Bible Convention of 1853.

Father Gavazzi comes to our country, and lifts up his eloquent voice against the despotisms and abominations of the Romish Church. But he is in bondage, and can do nothing more than delight a Protestant audience. He cannot do the "work of destruction," because he stands intrenched in *Protestantism*, which deserves the same fate. He cries out against the *ignorance*, the *idolatry*, the *slavery* of Catholicity; but against *Protestant* ignorance, idolatry and slavery, his voice cannot be raised, because the receivers of his messages are composed of the latter party. He affirms that *Catholicism is too narrow* for his soul. With a soul so expanded beyond the circumscribed confines of Pius the Ninth, I wonder how he can breathe the confined air of Protestant bigotry and superstition! I can see *no difference* between the *infallibility* of the Pope and the infallibility of Paul. But we have *political* freedom under Protestantism, which the Church of Rome denies to its subjects. Very true; but how came this blessing? It was first established through the instrumentality of the greatest despot, *Henry VIII.*, that ever ruled over mankind. But in our blessed land let us raise the hymn of gratitude to Thomas Paine, Jefferson, Franklin, and many others, who were the sworn friends of liberty and of free principles. Let it be remembered that the *political* and *other* blessings of America are not owing to any exertions on the part of priests, nor to any logical application of the doctrine of *Bible infallibility*, upon which Protestantism rests.

In a recent letter to *the clergy of all denominations* I affirmed that the Battle of the Evidences of Christianity is to be fought on the broad field of scientific and positive principles. The old metaphysical ground of idealistic

impossibilities — such as what and where is God? what and where is spirit? what and where is heaven? — are now scarcely admitted into the arena. But the mountain torrent of civilization has dashed along regardless of religious and mythical obstructions, and with each succeeding wave there comes to our land a *new discovery* in some department of creation. The progress of scientific discovery, in one brilliant day, is carrying the war into the very *heart* of biblical authority. The positive and unavoidable deductions of astronomy, of ethnology, of archæology, of hierology, of physiology, stand in startling opposition to nearly all the assumptions of popular theology pertaining to Bible infallibility. I will presently bring this fact more distinctly before the reader.

The scientific education of the Protestant clergy is so utterly neglected, while preparing for the ministry, that they usually enter the field of labor without the proper implements of spiritual husbandry. Consequently, having read the standard works on theology, and one or two books in reply to "infidel objections," the young minister is apt to entertain several inflated notions respecting the perfection of biblical wisdom. Sometimes we hear them preach thus: "The Bible has stood the test of ages. No closeness of inspection, keenness of investigation, or stricture of criticism, has been able to defeat its claims. Moses' account of creation is simple and sublime. The volume of destiny is suddenly thrown open; time is proclaimed; creation arises; and a new race of intelligence appears on the scene. Nothing can shake the plain narrative of Moses. The Bible is perfect in all its parts — full of excellences — and, taken as a whole, is without contradiction or inconsistency."

Most congregations accept this as a tenable doctrine

Children grow up with this conviction, and so the Protestant notion of *Bible infallibility* is kept alive and before the people. But now is the time to investigate these positions, because never before was the world so full of scientific discovery.

In the light of the nineteenth century the Mosaic account is notoriously unsound and fallible. We have a vast number of cogent reasons for rejecting the divine authority of Genesis. Let me ask your attention to a few of them.

*First.* "In the beginning God *created* heaven and earth." There are several philosophical objections to the truth of this statement. It is found that matter, though changeable, is *indestructible* — not a particle can be put out of existence. Chemists have tried the experiment in vain. Hence Nature declares that matter is *eternal* substance, and could not have sprung from nothing. The *creation* of matter implies the bringing of *something* into existence from *nothing*, which proposition no healthy mind can for a moment entertain. Here is one reason why we object to the Mosaic account.

*Second.* "And God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night." Aside from the supernatural operation here implied, there are very strong scientific objections to this statement. But first let us notice the *internal* contradiction. You will observe that there were three days and three nights *before* God put "*lights* in the firmament of the heaven to *divide the day from the night.*" Before the creation of a "greater light to rule the night," how, let me ask, could there have been "evenings and mornings?" But this objection is trivial in comparison to the following.

It is asserted that "darkness was upon the face of the deep" — that God said, "Let there be light, and there was light" — implying the absence at first of *all* light from the universe. This is in direct *antagonism to all the positive* discoveries of the age. "The celebrated speculation of La Place, now very generally received as probable by astronomers, concerning the origin of the earth and planets, participates essentially in the strictly inductive character of modern theory. The speculation is, that the *atmosphere of the sun* originally extended to the present limits of the solar system; from which, by the process of cooling, it has *contracted* to its present dimensions. There is in La Place's theory," says Mill, in his system of Logic, "*nothing* hypothetical; it is an example of legitimate reasoning from a present effect to a past cause, according to the known laws of that cause." Science demonstrates that first heat, *light* and electricity were in existence *before* the earth was formed; but Genesis makes the earth to exist *previous* to light! Nature and the Old Testament are here at war with each other. Which shall we believe?

*Third.* The Mosaic account is unsound because it teaches that the heavens and earth, and all that in them is, were made all *perfect* at once. "The Almighty voice is addressed to chaos. Confusion hears it, and wild uproar stands ruled. The waters subside; the verdant landscape is seen; songs burst from every grove; and stars, bright, rolling, and silent-beaming, are hurled forth from the Almighty hand." And Genesis also affirms that man was more pure, perfect and wise — more in unity with heaven and its Author — than the race is to-day!

In absolute refutation of all this, how explicit are the

positive declarations of universal nature! The *first* types of vegetation, the *first* indications of animal life, the *first* things performed or invented by mankind, were rough, crude, incomplete, and in every respect *inferior* to after developments. All things — trees, fish, birds, animals — grow from incompleteness to perfection, from rudeness to refinement, from the imperfect to the beautiful. And must all the declarations of Nature be overruled by the authority of a book whose origin is Eastern and mythical?

*Fourth.* We object to Genesis because of another *internal* contradiction. The book asserts that "God saw *every thing* that he had made, and, behold, it was *very good.*" If God saw *every thing*, and pronounced every thing *good*, let me ask: Who made the *wicked serpent* that tempted Eve? If this animal was more subtile than any beast of the field, having the devil in him, who created them? Who was it that made and pronounced every thing *good?*

*Fifth.* Genesis cannot be a true report of creation, because, instead of coinciding with the revelations of universal nature, which prove the *gradual* formation of the globe by a cooling-off process, the progressive introduction or development of plants and animals on its surface by a natural method of growth, the account teaches the particular, the sudden, the miraculous, the incomprehensible creation of everything in six literal days.

*Sixth.* Genesis *cannot* be a true report, because it contradicts the positive declarations of Astronomy. According to our system of chronological calculation, Moses makes the heavens and the earth about six thousand years old. But astronomy declares that *light* requires *three hundred thousand years to travel* from one of the

fixed stars to our earth! This one fact alone proves that those orbs have been in existence three hundred thousand years! But you answer, "that all things are possible with God." Paul denies this (Heb. 6: 18), and affirms by two *immutable* things it is impossible for God to lie. In this I believe with the apostle, for I cannot think that the Spirit of this beautiful universe is *capable* of an inconsistency!

*Seventh.* Genesis cannot be a true report, because it belittles our ideas of God. The extent and grandeur of the universe, the resplendent objects and countless assemblages which people the empire of being, cleanse and purify the mind of all contracted notions of the Deity and his government. But Moses destroys all consistent ideas of an omnipresent energizing Spirit, by describing him as a man making the universe in six days, and, being fatigued, as *resting* on the seventh; and not only so, but as "walking in the garden in the cool of the day"—as any common Egyptian god would be supposed to do—with hands and feet, and a limited power of vision. "Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of an *omnipresent*, omnipotent, omniscient Spirit. And an *omniscient* Being, unable to find the guilty pair among the trees of the garden, began to call unto Adam: "Where art thou?" And, after the creation was getting along altogether too fast and wickedly for the Creator, then, again, like an Egyptian god (Gen. 6: 6), "it *repented* the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." Now, all this is vastly too human and insignificant to be applied to the omniscient Spirit of this Universe. Every man, Christian or Pagan, when in his right mind, totally rejects the narrow and cramping idea of God advocated in the book

of Genesis and elsewhere. "A universe," says Rev. Thomas Dick, "vast, boundless and incomprehensible, is just such as we ought *naturally* to expect from a Being who is infinite, eternal and omnipresent; whose *power* is uncontrollable, whose *wisdom* is unsearchable, and whose *goodness* is boundless and diffusive. All his plans and operations must be, like himself, vast, boundless and inconceivable by mortals." Now, I submit *that this idea* is not applicable to the Mosaic God of creation!

*Eighth.* The most advanced thinkers among the supporters of the Mosaic theory have, as I am fully aware, made a virtue of necessity, by abandoning the idea of *six literal days* of creation, and accepting, instead, the geological interpretation of epochs or "ages." The most learned of modern Christian writers say, that the term "evening and the morning" must be accepted *figuratively* to mean the "ending and beginning" of indefinite stages of creative development. Very well; there can be no objection to putting a little *new* wine in an *old* bottle, if therefore the wine will but be more acceptable to creatures of habit. But here comes a trouble of inconsistency. If we are now to receive the six days as *figurative*, how shall we regard the *seventh day*, on which the Lord rested? If the six days signify "ages," what does the seventh day mean? Why are we inconsistently and hypocritically keeping *one day* in each common week as the day hallowed by the repose of Deity, while, in our theory, we are compelled to accept the *six days* as uncertain, immeasurable, indefinite strides of creative development? Here, again, the *positive* principles and deductions of a philosophical theology stand in direct antagonism to the accounts of Moses.

There are before my mind *eighteen* other reasons, all

equally cogent, going to invalidate the divine authority and intrinsic correctness of the very first chapters in King James' Bible. But we will let them pass, and ask attention to the *origin* of those chapters.

It is a singular and significant fact, that there is not a line in Egyptian history alluding to the existence or prodigies of Moses. The Egyptians were a cultivated people. Like a chain of mountains, their wonderful pyramids extend far behind the period set to Noah's *flood*, without so much as *mentioning* such a marvellous catastrophe or event. Recent ethnological discoveries carry us into the remote past, or *eight thousand years* from the present time, making the Egyptian nation, with signs of the existence of a still *riper* civilization previously, two thousand years older than Moses sets to the creation of man. The hierologist is sustained by Chinese records, and the later of geologic sciences.

And, what is still more remarkable, the thrilling mythic and simple orphic sayings and verses of Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor and Greece, are, in conception, and mostly in phraseology, *identical* with the *first part* of the book of Genesis. And when the hieroglyphic characters of Egypt, Tartary and Africa shall have been perfectly deciphered, it will be found, I think, that the cosmologic and demonologic relations of Moses were in existence nearly *two thousand years* before such a people as the Jews had begun to be. These discoveries, however, will be tardily introduced, because every traveller and antiquarian knows that he is writing books to be read by Protestant and sectarian readers.

Richard, in his work on Egyptian mythology, repudiates the idea that Moses was inspired to write the Pentateuch. He says: "The five books of Moses carry

with them *internal* evidence, *not* of one sole, connected, original composition, but they bear evidence of being *a compilation from earlier annals.* The genealogical tables and family records of various tribes, that are found embodied in the Pentateuch, bear the appearance of documents *copied from written* archives. They display no trait which might lead us to ascribe their production to the dictates of immediate revelation." The first ten chapters of Genesis, which contain an account of creation, are nearly two thousand years older than the Jewish nation. The pyramids and obelisks of Egypt, and the hieroglyphic records on the land of Tartary, will, when fairly brought to the light, reveal the Oriental parentage of the books of Moses.

Perhaps you think me too far in advance of discovery. The celebrated Mr. Gliddon, in his carefully written work on "Ancient Egypt," says: "There is no reason for supposing that other cotemporary nations * did not possess, in those earlier times, similar records; nor is there any reason why other cotemporary nations should not have chronicled all great events, and handed down, as far as ourselves, some of the annals of *those events* on which the Bible, during an interval of *four hundred years*, is strictly silent." Two books, one entitled the "Wars of Jehovah," and the other "Sepher-Hajasher," have been found, which our Bible does not contain. How came these omissions?

Intelligent Christians acknowledge that the present antiquated mode of biblical interpretation cannot withstand the positive deductions of all the sciences and discoveries of the age. Regarded as a record of physical

* That is, nations existing at the time of the Israelites.

events, the Mosaic history cannot be sustained. Hence many minds are driven into spiritual or symbolic interpretation. The creation of the world, the garden of Eden, the temptation and fall, the deluge and tower of Babel, are received by many as symbolic relations — as types of spiritual experience and events — referring equally to nations and individuals. Swedenborg, distinguished for his historic and scientific knowledge, declares, in his commentary on the Jewish Testament, that these events and accounts can be understood and supported only in a *figurative* or spiritual sense — implying that a literal view of them, as entertained by New England clergy and laity, is at once absurd, untenable and unsupportable by nature, reason, intuition and history. It would consume our time to present Swedenborg's science of correspondences; but enough is adduced to show what reasonable men and scholars think of the Mosaic account. Swedenborg affirms that the early Scriptures were written in correspondential language, of which the hieroglyphic scriptures of earth are vestiges. Every figure *symbolized* some particular idea. Thus, as some writer remarks, a *beetle* did not stand for a beetle only, but also for the *world;* an *asp* corresponded to *royalty;* the *eagle*, to *courage;* the *lion*, to *strength;* a *ram's head*, to *intellect;* a *duck*, to a *doctor of medicine;* and a *goose*, to a *doctor of divinity.*

The idea that the Bible is a connected whole, without contradiction or inconsistency, is a superstition of the Protestant priesthood. The intelligent and accomplished Jesuit entertains no such untenable opinion. He depends upon the external despotisms of organization, and upon the attractions of a well-regulated and venerable ecclesiasticism, for the success of his design upon the

religious liberties of humanity. Protestantism and Catholicism deserve the same condemnation. They differ, not in the character of their notions respecting infallibility, but in *degree* only.

The Catholic idea of Pope and Church infallibility is simply an elongation or extension of the Protestant idea of Old and New Testament infallibility.

The two parties are, in theory and theology, equally *foes* to the interests and liberties of the world. And I have shown, I think, that *one* should not be allowed to impose any more restrictions on the soul of man than the other; that is to say, neither is good enough to merit the support of intelligent, benevolent, free and conscientious minds.

Have I said anything against true religion? Because I reject the infallibility of Paul and the Pope — the infallibility of a book and a church — am I therefore irreligious? The Old Testament is a statement of the ideas and events of the Patriarchal Age — the era of Force; the New Testament is a statement of the ideas and events of the Transitional Age — the era of Love; the two, combined, formed King James' Bible. But let me ask — why should the statement of one age *remain* the statement of all ages?

Can religion be based on a book? This idea has obtained among Christians; hence they imagine the heathen to be benighted, and *without* religion! Is God a respecter of persons or nations? Far from it. True religion, like true anatomy and physiology, is *older* than books! There must be a religion *older* than the Bible, a God *better* than it declares.

Did Newton learn astronomy in books? Did Jesus learn intuition and love of all human kind from the

prophets? Is there no inexhaustible fountain from whose flowing rivulets each soul may freely drink? Does the same God not always inspire and nourish? What would ye think of a man who does all his *farming*, *ploughing* and *planting*, by *reading books* on Egyptian and Roman agriculture? The land before his eyes would meanwhile grow *thorns* and unwholesome vegetation. What, then, do ye think of Christians who bid their followers to *read* and *believe* King James' version of the Testaments, to the end that they may be *religious* and acceptable unto God? He who would not "be wise above what is written" (in any book) is a miserable pagan, engaged in blindly loving his ideals, and needs philosophic culture. For is there not a law, a science, a principle of justice and equity, in man's mental economy, *superior* to all writing? Let every son and daughter of nature be developed to the *fulness of the structure of the perfect man* — let society develop the kingdom of Justice and Freedom within each soul and family — then you will see a manifestation of TRUE RELIGION.

mJ